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RAINER MARIA RILKE: AN ESTIMATE

BARKER FAIRLEY

AS the student of literature discovers sooner or later, a writer's dates can be somewhat misleading; and so it proves to be with Rilke. He died in 1926, aged fifty-two, which means that if he were alive now he would be in his upper sixties, not conspicuously old. His *Sonnets to Orpheus* and his *Duino Elegies*, two closely related cycles of poems, regarded by himself and others as his crowning achievement, were written (the sonnets in their entirety, the elegies for the most part) in 1922, the year in which T. S. Eliot published *The Waste Land:* all of which tends to date Rilke as post-war rather than pre-war, in the sense of the War of 1914. Moreover, his European and international reputation has come in quite recent years. At the time of his death he was not well known abroad: wider recognition began after then.

One would expect that a poet so nearly contemporary in his chronology would be himself in some stricter sense contemporary, either in the problems that occupied him or the values that he established. To the best of my judgment this does not prove to be the case. Rilke, we find, belongs to the world before 1914. Nothing that has happened since then ever really reached him. Recent as has been his emergence, he is already an historical figure, separated from us by a clear interval, and must be seen as such if he is to be understood.

This is scarcely the accepted view, and it may seem a drastic one. Yet it draws its strongest support from Rilke's letters. He had begun to write his *Duino Elegies* in 1912, not suspecting that he would wait ten years to finish them. During that interval, and more particularly from 1914 on, he preserved an almost unbroken silence—at least as a poet; and this not from choice but from necessity. His creative mind was stopped, almost paralysed. In his letters he finds the most telling words to express his condition. Thus in May, 1917, he writes: "This age with all its barriers and its fearful destructiveness holds me in a leaden mould—*ist wie Blei an mich herangegossen*—I cannot move, neither outwardly nor very far inwardly. And if deep down there is any life left, I am too dulled and opaque to feel and recognize it as part of me." Later, in October, 1918, he speaks of being frozen up—*innere*

Vereisung—cut off from everything, even from himself. And when the war was over, he said that he had spent all the time "waiting, always thinking it would stop, not understanding, not understanding, not understanding."

Recovery from such a condition could not come, like armistice, in a single day: the condition continued long after. And when recovery came it did not bring with it any digestion of recent experience, but was simply a return to the exact point of interruption. Rilke speaks of the necessity of fitting his future work so exactly to the fractures of 1914 that it will heal and grow there. It was a brief visit to Paris, in October, 1920, that began to release him. "I fit at all the broken places"—*ich passe an alle Bruchstellen*—he says, using the fracture image again, as if he were a piece of Paris that had been broken off and replaced. This surgical imagery, to express the setting of a broken spirit so that it should recover exactly its former shape and life, conveys as nothing else could the completeness of Rilke's need to return to where he was before and the utter infertility of those annihilated years—*vernichtete Jahre*, he calls them. As always in Rilke, the image is exact and tells us more than any paraphrase. The fracture, the long wait, the perfect healing are a metaphorical statement of the balder truth that all Rilke's dates after 1914 are unreal dates.

Thus the War of 1914 was not something that Rilke experienced but rather something that knocked him out and prevented him from experiencing it. All he felt was the blow. The only verses he wrote on the war were the five *Odes* of August, 1914; but these did not express his experience of war, but only his anticipation of that experience. The god he apostrophizes is an unknown quantity, as he admits when he says, "For the first time I see thee rise, Remotest, incredible, hearsay god of war"—*hörengesagter, fernster, unglaublicher Kriegsgott.*

These five odes are remarkable among Rilke's verses because here he suddenly feels himself one with his generation, saying, "I *am* no longer. My heart beats out of the common heart and the common mouth opens my mouth":

> *aus dem gemeinsamen Herzen*
> *schlägt das meine den Schlag, und der gemeinsame Mund*
> *bricht den meinigen auf.*

This is a strong and appealing note for Rilke to strike, but our acceptance of it is qualified by the thought that the mood only

lasted long enough in him for him to state it, and then left him as abruptly as it came. Anyone who knows Rilke knows that this is a wrong note for him. The truth is that, while Rilke for a moment tricked himself into thinking that he could speak thus in unison and become, as it were, a corporate or national voice, he was in reality a poet of the very opposite sort, individual, separate, private to a degree seldom, if ever, exceeded. It was only by being untrue to himself that he was able to write a war-poem at all. Otherwise he would have been able to go on from there instead of stopping.

The extremely private nature of Rilke's inspiration gives us a more positive clue to his historical position. The notion of the private artist or the pure artist, like the notion of art for art's sake, of which it is the obvious correlative, is not one that could arise today. If it exists today, it exists only as a survival from the days before 1914 or from the eighteen-nineties or, more broadly speaking, from the nineteenth century. For in truth it took a whole era to breed that type of artist and present it in all its completeness. Of this type, however, Rilke is one of the purest examples we know and one of the worthiest. What distinguishes him from others of his kind, and lifts him securely above most, if not all, of them, is the completeness with which he accepts his position. In his case there is no dallying with it or even scrutiny of it. He neither questions his peculiar isolation in life nor prides himself on it, but simply takes it for granted as the poet's lot. How unquestioning, how absolute, was his acceptance of privacy and solitude as the necessary condition for him is very clearly shown in his attitude to marriage. When Rilke married—for somehow he did manage to marry—his chief concern was to interpret this undertaking in terms of his privacy. He says: "For my way of feeling it is not a question in marriage of establishing any quick communion by tearing down or upsetting all the boundaries. A good marriage is rather one in which each shows his supreme confidence in the other by making the other the guardian of his solitude." When a child is born in this marriage, Rilke does not retract; instead he writes that the wall they have built round themselves now seems complete.

This is not a passing whim of Rilke's, but a deep and permanent conviction which comes out more than once in his maturest verse. Witness that extraordinary but by no means unique passage in his eighth Elegy, written more than twenty years later, in which he is

talking of the possibility of mystic vision or of seeing into the beyond. He says that lovers come near to this experience, but interfere with one another and so frustrate it, his ideal lover being therefore a person who could eliminate himself or herself at the crucial moment. "Lovers, if the other were not there to block the view, are near to it":—

Liebende, wäre nicht der andre, der
die Sicht verstellt, sind nah daran....

There is all Rilke's life in these passages, whether we look at his subdued childhood in Prague or at his last refuge in the castle of Muzot in the Swiss canton of Wallis. Most of this life was spent cultivating solitude either in hotels or lodgings or in the houses of that lesser nobility into whose hands he inevitably drifted. Finding that direct intercourse with people sapped and destroyed his power, he fell back on letter-writing and made letters a creative supplement to his verse.

For such a nature and for such a life there is only one basis or starting-place—the inner self. Rilke's earlier books show this very clearly. His *Book of Hours*—the *Stundenbuch*—and his *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* are very different, it is true, the first being a religious meditation in verse in the tradition of the German mystics, and growing out of two very unrealistic visits to Russia in 1899 and 1900, the other a sort of prose diary, partly based on letters and much concerned with lonely days in Paris. But with all their difference they both seem to draw from the same deep well of introspectiveness and never to exhaust it. Of the two books the prose is in my opinion the more authentic and the more revealing. Here we have glimpses of a morbidity that is not far from madness. The thought that in some degree the book was purgative—a casting out of devils—helps to make it tolerable:

> The presence of horror in every particle of air. You breathe it in invisibly. But inside you it forms a deposit, it hardens, takes on pointed geometrical forms among your organs. For all the torment and horror that has been enacted on scaffolds, in torture-chambers, madhouses, operation rooms, and under the arches of bridges in the late fall—all this is tough and imperishable. Jealous of all life, it asserts and clings to its own dreadful reality. People would like to forget much of it. Their sleep files gently over those furrows in the brain, but dreams crowd it off and retrace the drawings. And they wake up and breathe heavily and let the gleam of a candle dissolve in the darkness and drink comfort from the half-light like sweetened water.

If Rilke had continued in this vein he would be easy to deal with,

but he is much more complex. Along with the impulse that dictated these withdrawn and sometimes agonizing pages, there was another, scarcely less deeply rooted in him, but much harder to release, which strove to escape this prison and attach itself to the visible world. It must have been in obedience to this second impulse that he was so quick to associate with artists in the visible medium and to cultivate in himself something of their kind of sensibility. Consider in this connection his stay in the artist colony at Worpswede, his marriage with a sculptress who belonged to this colony, his letters at a later date on Cézanne, and his indebtedness, later still, to Picasso's acrobats for his fifth Elegy; further, his extreme sensitiveness to places—comparable with Nietzsche's, but different—and especially to Paris, to Spain (or rather, Toledo), and finally to the canton of Wallis, where he found his ideal environment,—all of this culminating in the esoteric space-imagery that comes out so often in his later verse.

It was this impulse, obviously, that took him in 1905 to Rodin, at whose feet he sat for a while. No stranger pair of artists had ever associated—Rodin always the busy and unthinking workman, Rilke sitting with his hands in his lap waiting for the voice, the inner voice, to speak. But it was not an unfruitful association: it enabled Rilke to write a group of poems about things, or chiefly about things, that will not soon be forgotten. He went to the Jardin des Plantes and watched the panthers and the gazelles and the flamingoes; he looked at flowers, roses, hydrangeas; he looked at architecture, a portal or a flight of steps or a statue; and coming at these objects out of the dark within himself, he was able to see them with a new vividness, almost a clairvoyancy. It is like eyesight made radio-active, or as if one could see with eyes shut and eyes open at the same time.

"The Panther" is the best known of this best-known group and understandably so, for it is perfect in itself, though perhaps too Schopenhauerian to be perfect Rilke.

> Its gaze is so wearied with the passing of the bars that it sees nothing, as if there were a thousand bars and nothing beyond. The soft tread of strong and supple steps, turning in the smallest of circles, is like a dance of energy about a centre in which a great will stands stupefied. But now and then the curtain of the eye lifts silently and an image goes in, goes through the tense stillness of the limbs and dies in the heart.
>
> *Sein Blick ist vom Vorübergehn der Stäbe*
> *so müd geworden, dass er nichts mehr hält.*

Ihm ist, als ob es tausend Stäbe gäbe
und hinter tausend Stäben keine Welt.

Der weiche Gang geschmeidig starker Schritte,
der sich im allerkleinsten Kreise dreht,
ist wie ein Tanz von Kraft um eine Mitte,
in der betäubt ein grosser Wille steht.

Nur manchmal schiebt der Vorhang der Pupille
sich lautlos auf—Dann geht ein Bild hinein,
geht durch der Glieder angespannte Stille—
und hört im Herzen auf zu sein.

Something of this spirit-photography spreads itself now over a variety of subjects. Rilke has become a master in the discovering of correspondences between the inner and the outer life. He is not the first to do this. It is as old as poetry. But he never fails to make it new. Sometimes as in the poem "Corrida"—a bull-fight—and even in "The Panther" the outer thing predominates, but such poems are less typical than others in which the reverse is true. Rilke does not externalize his genius in any Parnassian or monumental sense. Rather is it as if his introspectiveness had suddenly annexed a piece of the outer world, making it a sort of extension of itself, yet leaving it in all its sharp visibility. Even where there is the barest minimum of descriptiveness, there arises the presence of the specific thing that Rilke has now learned to see.

A beautiful instance of this will be found in the poem about an orchard of apple-trees—*Der Apfelgarten*—a finer poem to my mind than the better-known "Panther," or at any rate a poem much more truly Rilkean. And here for once he says explicitly in the poem that the thing he is looking at comes from inside him: he is not really surrendering his mind to the world of things, but invading the world of things with his mind and building up what he sees out of the fabric of what he long has felt. Thus the introspective impulse remains the dominant one, even here where he seems to be overcoming it. Notice how in this poem he relies on the one word, Dürer, to supply the poem with the sharp focus that would otherwise be lacking.

Come now that the sun has set and look at the green turf in the evening light. Is it not as if we had long been gathering it and saving it up inside ourselves to spread it now before us in thought out of our feelings and memories, new hopes and half-forgotten joys—the darkness from within us still clinging to them—among trees that Dürer might have painted, trees bearing the weight of a hundred

work-days in their laden fruits, full of service and patience and the endeavour to lift up and to offer that which is beyond all measure, gladly desiring this one thing all their life long and growing in silence.

Komm gleich nach dem Sonnenuntergange,
sieh das Abendgrün des Rasengrunds;
ist es nicht als hätten wir es lange
angesammelt und erspart in uns,

um es jetzt aus Fühlen und Erinnern,
neuer Hoffnung, halbvergessnem Freun,
noch vermischt mit Dunkel aus dem Innern,
in Gedanken vor uns hinzustreun

unter Bäume wie von Dürer, die
das Gewicht von hundert Arbeitstagen
in den überfüllten Früchten tragen,
dienend, voll Geduld, versuchend, wie

das, was alle Masse übersteigt,
noch zu heben ist und hinzugeben,
wenn man willig, durch ein langes Leben
nur das Eine will und wächst und schweigt.

We can satisfy ourselves that this discovery of things, and this desire to spiritualize them, took a central place in Rilke's mind because when he came to write his ninth Elegy, in 1922, he turns his desire into a message and interprets it as the meaning and purpose of life: "Are we put here to say: house, bridge, gate, jug, fruit-tree, window—even column, tower, but to say them, oh to say them the way they never thought they were. . . . Is not this your desire, O Earth, to grow invisible within us? Is it not your dream to be invisible some day?"

Out of this thought of translating the visible world into invisible or, might we say, into the spiritually visible, Rilke extracts an extraordinary sense of ecstasy and affirmation, which he pours out in the concluding lines of this elegy and continues in the fifty-five *Sonnets to Orpheus*, in which even where the meaning is beyond our reach the mood is clear and rapturous. The musical imagery of Orpheus which gives its name to the sequence need not perplex us. Having made the outer world invisible (as he puts it), having subordinated it to his introspectiveness (as we might prefer to put it), what is more natural than that he should break into song like a blinded bird, turning seeing into hearing, as in the very opening lines of the first Sonnet where he speaks of Orpheus singing as

a tree heard, a "tree in the ear"—*O hoher Baum im Ohr?* This, if you like, is what becomes of the apple-orchard in its final mutation.

Orpheus, then, is presumably the image Rilke uses to express his most intimate sense of the outer world made invisible. It is significant that in the last to be written of all these poems—in date of composition the concluding poem in this double series of elegies and sonnets—Rilke is continuing to think of the outer world and his mysterious relation to it. It is a poem about breathing and the air we breathe—one of the strangest and most rarefied of all Rilke's poems, on a first reading almost unintelligible, yet in the end perfectly lucid and logical. The air we breathe is the outer world at its most refined point of physical contact with ourselves. When we breathe it in, we make it inward. When we breathe it out, we project our inwardness upon the universe and slowly build a new dimension. The poem is simply a variant on Rilke's main theme, as formulated in the elegies, and while it must seem far-fetched to our average humanity, we have only to recall that earlier passage, quoted from the prose *Notebooks*, about breathing horror in every breath, to see what a long way Rilke has travelled beyond his initial morbidity, and we are better able to understand why Rilke felt that he had now at last established a sort of spiritual mastery over life.

There can be no doubt about it, this final message of Rilke's was of the utmost importance to him, enabling him as it did to end his frail existence in company with the thought that he had in his own way established an ascendancy over life and a justification of it. But it is unlikely that it can have a comparable value for any but an infinitesimal percentage of his fellow-men because it is so patently an artist's message, applicable only to the artist's life or to that part of us that can share in the artist's life by a sort of proxy. After all, what Rilke says in this poetic climax of his is that he owed everything to the poems that Rodin helped him to write. But how are the rest of us—save in the most attenuated sense of the word—to go and do likewise? Here Rilke is seen to pay the inexorable penalty of his privacy. It has doomed him to a private morality. Having always lived inside his own charmed circle, he was unable to break through into the real world.

This is not the whole of Rilke nor is it the whole of the *Duino Elegies*, which are far too elusive to be summed up in any brief analysis. The strange thing about these elegies is that, while Rilke

wrote them as a final statement—a sort of last will and testament—and always regarded them in this light, they are, I submit, for any candid reader today the reverse of final. Unlike the Rodin poems, which mark a clear attitude and a clear achievement, the elegies are full of gropings, of adumbrations, of something half-achieved. Reading them, one has continually the sense of tendrils unrolling and feeling their way out into a darkness. True, it is a darkness that seems never to have been entered before, but the darkness remains. This does not mean that the elegies are less than the Rodin poems; they are potentially far more. What surprises us is that Rilke should have been so unable to envisage their real character, that he should have been so unaware of their tentativeness as to feel that he had really reached a poetic terminus and could now, if he chose, set a full-stop to his work.

In these poems Rilke was clearly attempting some more structural and comprehensive statement of his thoughts about the universe. He had always been possessed with thoughts of death, not as an end but as a beginning, and not as something outside life but as something that in a truer view permeated it and together with it constituted the real, the larger life. This is the thought that underlies those half-ironical pages in his *Notebooks*, where he dwells on the artificial deaths that people now die, deaths not prepared for and achieved, but clumsy and unrelated to life:

> Who would give anything today for a well-executed death? Nobody. Even the rich who could afford to die elaborately are beginning to be careless and indifferent. The desire to have a death of one's own is getting rarer and rarer. Before long it will be just as rare as a life of one's own. It is all provided. You come, you find a life, ready-made, you only have to put it on. You want to go or you have to go. There is no effort about it. *Voilà votre mort, monsieur.* You die the way it comes. You die the death that belongs to the disease you have.

It was the same thought again that enabled him to write his beautiful requiems, and especially the "Requiem to Paula Modersohn"—a woman artist who died in child-birth—where the sense of progression continuing in the after-life is so intimately and so movingly conveyed. In the elegies this thought crops up continually and is often required where it is not stated. Under the stress of this thought Rilke now goes so far as to postulate, though he scarcely succeeds in creating, a hierarchy of angels—rather Mohammedan, he said, than Christian—who have the freedom of life and death and move or are able to move in both worlds. "The living," he says, "all make the mistake of distinguishing too sharply.

Angels, they say, often cannot tell whether they are among the living or the dead."

Within the larger framework of death and life Rilke liberates some of his deeper thoughts—thoughts above all on man's perplexity in a universe which at every other plane of consciousness seems so free from perplexity. "We are divided," he says, "we lack the sure understanding of birds that migrate. Late and left behind, we throw ourselves upon the winds and are dropped into unfeeling ponds:"

Ueberholt und spät,
so drängen wir uns plötzlich Winden auf
und fallen ein auf teilnahmslosen Teich.

At every turn Rilke's thoughts are individual and surprising, and in one place or another he seems to touch on all the ancient themes of lyrical poetry—lovers, children, parents, heroes, the early dead. Who could forget his disturbing thoughts on heredity in the third Elegy—"that secret, guilty river-god of the blood"; his symbolizing of a child's death in the sixth Elegy as "the core of an apple left sticking in its round mouth"; or the flight of a bird in the eighth Elegy—"As if terrified of itself it twitches through the air, like a crack going through a cup, so the bat tears its way through the evening's porcelain." An image as difficult as this—incidentally a space-image again—in what is perhaps the easiest and best of the Elegies may serve to remind us how inaccessible they are to our every-day minds even where their meaning is not in doubt.

Sitting in literary judgment on the *Elegies*, it would be easy to approve here and disapprove there. If I had this game to play I should knock out the fourth Elegy on the ground of its inner confusion—it was written, by the way, during the war, and this may account for the confusion; the fifth, the Picasso Elegy, for being out of key with the rest; and the tenth for being sentimental in the wrong place. This would leave seven elegies more closely knit and conveying almost the full meaning of the present ten, ending too on the very note that the immediately following sonnets call for: "superabundant life rises in my heart"—

Ueberzähliges Dasein
entspringt mir im Herzen.

Ease this selection from the elegies with the pick of the Rodin poems, stiffen it with some of the sonnets and posthumous poems, and the Rilke anthology is soon made. It ranks him, for those

who want to rank him, easily among the first half-dozen or so of those who have sung in German and easily again among the masters —more of them French, Rilke would have said, than German—of the modern European lyric.

This anthology attitude to Rilke raises no problems. Here, where philosophies are not involved, he is superlative. But what about his work as a whole and the meaning and significance of it? The answer here is that its significance is conditioned and reduced by its idiosyncrasy. Even at its finest Rilke's work does not stay for long at any impersonal level but continually slips into his personal note, so that no matter what he is dealing with, whether it be Orpheus and Eurydice or a medieval knight in armour, the prophet Jeremiah or a torso of Apollo, Adam and Eve or St Sebastian, a morgue or a merry-go-round, he does not quite lose himself in his subject but reminds us of himself where we were ready to forget him. True, there are exceptions. There is, for example, a poem of twenty-nine lines on Christ's descent into hell—*Christi Höllenfahrt*—in which Rilke seems to disappear and the great theme to take control. Even the style breaks out of the Rilke pattern. This is a poem that he himself knew the worth of. He regarded it in 1917 as marking the highest point in his lyrical achievement thus far, and when he wrote it, in 1913, the *Duino Elegies* were already partly executed. But he was not able to sustain this kind of writing. For the most part we are all too conscious of what Rilke says of himself in his poem "Self-Portrait": "in his glance something of the timidity and the blue of childhood, and here and there humility, not slavish but ministering and feminine"—

Im Blicke noch der Kindheit Angst und Blau
und Demut da und dort, nicht eines Knechtes,
doch eines Dienenden und einer Frau.

What I said of the ninth Elegy—that its privacy limited its morality —must be extended to the whole of his work. Whichever way we approach it, there is always the same interference, a little confining, speaking rather to intimates than to our common humanity.

One might be content to explain this in terms of Rilke's cult of solitude and a certain frailty of temperament. But this is not enough; for other artists before Rilke have been solitary and yet kept solitude out of their work, others have been not quite equal to life without ever making us feel it. What handicapped Rilke was not so much his loneliness and his frailty—he mastered these as

well as any—it was rather his too great concern with his art which made everything subserve his poetic purpose and prevented him from surrendering to things. Even his religious life was somehow subordinated to his creative: it was never a matter of life and death, never a matter of salvation, but always of the saving poem. That is why he is able to say in one of his letters that he could not understand religious natures which simply accepted God and shared in him without having a try at him creatively—*ohne sich an ihm produktiv zu versuchen*. Not that his religious life was false—far from it—but all its fervour was canalized into his poetry and only reaches us through that medium. There was a saint in Rilke and there was a martyr, and in a religious age he might have got himself burned or crucified as likely as not, but he lived in the age of the ivory tower and that made all the difference.

In consequence of this, his achievement stands strangely aloof from the great currents of his time. It is unscientific in the extreme, unsocial, un-German—notice that at the last he was translating Valéry and writing verses in French. It is not affiliated clearly to any movement of research or philosophy or religion, whether in his own time or in any other. It is in every sense homeless, as he was, integrated with nothing except his slender self. What validity can a body of poetry have which is thus privately conditioned? With what authority does Rilke speak?

A generation ago it would have been altogether easier than now to take Rilke just as poetry, just as literature, without trying to relate him to life. But it is becoming increasingly difficult to take this easy view. The established criteria which enabled the historian of literature to assess his authors are themselves being questioned, openly by the more advanced minds today, and tacitly by all those who feel vaguely dissatisfied with literary things without quite knowing why. The decline of literature as a humane discipline and training for life in our universities is merely one of many symptoms that something in the literary business has got out of date and had better be looked into. The going-down one after another of the orthodox literary journals is another of the symptoms. Somehow or other living values will have to supplant literary values, or rather so permeate them that they will never be the same again. And so we are driven to ask not just how good a poet is Rilke in the light of the protected standards of the past,

but also in the light of the disturbed present how significant is he for those seeking any sort of truth or guidance?

And quite apart from the pressure of today there is something in Rilke himself that invites and calls for this severer scrutiny—there is a deeper seriousness, a search for something, a religious fervour even, which (in terms of German literature) makes us associate him with Hölderlin rather than with Mörike. Hölderlin, it is true, stands the test better than Rilke because, even if Hölderlin failed to come through to any mature findings or synthesis, he at least supplied a sort of hopeless battleground for the spiritual issues of his time, whereas Rilke never really faced his time and on the whole turned his mind away from it.

Nevertheless, Rilke has his victory and it is in a sense simply the reverse side of the coin. The instinct in him which robbed him of authority gave him success of another kind. His preoccupation with his art may have been unwise, but it was also heroic and compels, and will always compel, our admiration and perhaps even more than admiration. In a letter of 1912 he writes to a medical adviser: "I know that all is not well with me, and you, my friend, may have noticed it too, but believe me when I say that nothing affects me more deeply than the miracle of my own existence which beginning with every initial handicap—*so unmöglich angelegt*—has again and again come, as it were, through the hardest rock." Rilke lived in the spirit or, if you like, in the shadow, of that confession always. And in his own way he held out to the last. There is a story in his *Notebooks* which tells a lot about him. It describes the death of a poet, Felix Arvers:

> He was in hospital, dying in quiet and composed fashion. Perhaps the nurse thought that he was further on with it than he really was. And she called out something, some instructions, to someone in a really loud voice. She was not well educated and she had never seen in writing the word "corridor" that she now had to use and so it seems she said "collidor," thinking that was the word. Whereupon Arvers postponed his dying. It seemed necessary to him to clear this matter up first. His mind grew quite lucid and he explained to her that the word was "corridor." And then he died. He was a poet and hated all inaccuracy. Or perhaps he was concerned with the truth or else it bothered him to think of taking with him as his last impression the thought of the world going on thus casually. We shall never be able to settle that question. But do not think that it was pedantry.

It would seem as if the artistic conscience, the artistic integrity, in Rilke was of exactly this strength, capable of prolonging his

existence until he had finished his job and then releasing him. His death in 1926 came so appropriately—not very long after the completion of the elegies—that it feels like part of his life, as he would have wished it to be.

Here is an intensity, an absoluteness of spirit that does not come every day. It may be in recognition of this that Rilke has been in recent years the most widely read and deeply revered of lyrical poets—the term "widely" applying only to the relatively small community that reads lyrical poetry strenuously—and that in England, perhaps also on this side of the Atlantic, no German poet has ever been so quickly and so seriously received. Not only has most of Rilke's important prose and verse been translated into English; the *Duino Elegies*—the most uncompromising of Rilke's poems—have been translated twice and each time by or with the collaboration of an English poet, first Victoria Sackville-West and then Stephen Spender. In Hugh MacDiarmid's poem to Rilke it is precisely this uncompromising quality that attracts him, as if he were sensing in Rilke an unremittingness of spiritual endeavour not easy to keep up with, even for him.

It would seem ungenerous to cavil at this widespread devotion to a poet whose sincerity is beyond praise and whose skill is of the highest. Nevertheless, the uneasy question remains as to why he is so widely read today or why he was so widely read in the nineteen-thirties. We have to remember that it is part of the rapidly changing contemporary situation that, while there are new ideas abroad in the sphere of social and political philosophy, there is a lack of new ideas in the sphere of aesthetics, so that even those who are most eager to keep poetry strictly abreast of the times have not quite found the means of doing it and in such a dilemma are apt to feel the attraction of yesterday with an added strength. There may be a danger in living with Rilke. Or at least there may be a misapprehension. Is it certain that in seeming to put life's deepest problems before us he is not offering a subtle withdrawal from them? Are those who—in one country or another—see him as their mentor or their talisman quite sure that they are not also using him as a keepsake? In insisting on this contemporary doubt it is not a question of whether it is fair to so unworldly a figure as Rilke to submit him to the accidents of the moment. The larger question is whether we are today approaching or receding from a true view of literature. The honest reader of Rilke will have to answer that question and deal with him accordingly.

THE BEGINNINGS OF WRITING

THEOPHILE J. MEEK

WE all remember with what straining minds and cramped fingers we learned to write, and how long and wearisome the process was. Well, if it took us a long time to learn, it took the human race thousands of years longer. Scientists have calculated that man has been on this planet of ours for at least a million years, and yet it was not until about 3500 B.C., i.e., some 5,500 years ago, that man first learned to write. He had speech from the beginning, but it took him many thousands of years to devise some method whereby he could put speech into writing.

I

It was only a few years ago that we discovered where man first began to write. In the recent excavations on the lower Euphrates in Mesopotamia, at a place called Uruk, the excavators suddenly came upon a collection of over two hundred ancient clay tablets, which clearly represent the beginning of writing. Uruk is known as Erech in the Bible and is situated not far from the city of Ur, the biblical Ur of the Chaldees. Like Ur it was founded by a people known as the Sumerians, who came into the country from the east and gave the name Sumer to the land (or more properly Shumer), known in the Bible as Shinar. We know very little about the beginnings of the Sumerians, but we do know that they were a most remarkable people, who have contributed more than any other to the general culture of the world. Practically every phase of modern civilization has its roots in Sumerian soil—our art in all its forms (sculpture, painting, ceramics, handicrafts, music, dancing, play-acting), our science in all its branches (mathematics, chemistry, geology, medicine, astronomy), our legal procedure in the law-courts and in business, and much in our literature and in our religion. But our greatest debt to these ancient Sumerians is the invention of writing, which is surely man's greatest achievement. It is this that has made it possible for him to put down his ideas in permanent form and pass them on to future generations to take up and improve. It is writing that has made possible the transmission and diffusion of knowledge. Without writing we should still be in the depths of barbarism. It

took man thousands of years to invent a system of writing, and in those thousands of years he advanced very slowly indeed. But with the invention of writing he surged forward by leaps and bounds and became definitely civilized almost overnight.

The early Sumerians, in their alluvial land made by the silt of the Tigris and the Euphrates, had no stone on which to write, but they did have plenty of mud. Out of this they proceeded to make little mud-pies, and it was on these that they learned to write, using a sharpened piece of wood or bone as a stylus. After the tablets were inscribed, they were dried in the hot sun and this made them quite hard. As time went on the Sumerians learned to bake the tablets in an oven, and this made them harder still and well-nigh imperishable. The result is that we find them by hundreds and thousands in the excavations: the earliest from Uruk alone,[1] others somewhat later from Uruk and Jemdet-Nasr, near Babylon,[2] and then thousands and thousands of others in the developed script from all over the country.

The first writing of the Sumerians was prompted by the fact that they wanted to make a record of various items that were brought to and dispensed from the temple treasury—items like different kinds of grains, fruits, and animals. They accordingly drew pictures of the various items that they wanted to list and then invented a numerical system to indicate the amounts of each. This first writing was picture writing. Each sign was a crude picture of a concrete object, and the writing was accordingly limited to concrete ideas and could not of course represent abstract thought. But these early Sumerians were practical business folk, and their pictographic writing was eminently suited to their practical business needs.

This picture writing, however, was not real writing. It represented ideas only, and not language, i.e., it did not indicate at all what words expressed the ideas that were pictured, and from these pictures alone we could never have learned anything about the language. But the Sumerians did not stop with mere pictures. Presently came the urge to commit thought as well as concrete ideas to writing and to represent the actual words that were used to give expression to those thoughts and ideas. This involved giving sound

[1]Published by A. Falkenstein, *Archaische Texte aus Uruk* (1936).

[2]Published by A. Falkenstein, *op. cit.*, and S. Langdon, *Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Tablets*, VII (1928).

values to the various pictures, and that is exactly what the Sumerians proceeded to do. For example, the human arm was called "da" in Sumerian and to the picture of the arm the phonetic value of "da" was accordingly given, and this could be used anywhere for the syllable "da" as well as for the word "da" meaning "arm." Thus to every picture the Sumerians gave syllabic values as well as word values, and so they put themselves in the position of being able to spell out in syllables anything that they said in speech, no matter how abstract it might be. It would be like writing the abstract word "belief" in English by drawing the picture of a bee, followed by the picture of a leaf ("bee-leaf" = "belief"). And because the Sumerians had certain words that consisted of nothing but a single vowel (like "e" for "house," and "a" for "water"), the pictures representing these words came to represent the vowels as well. Thus we are able from their writing to reproduce the exact pronunciation of every word and hence to discover the general character and structure of the language. And a very remarkable language we find it to be, befitting the remarkable people who used it. The language is like no other that we know, but that is to be expected because it is the oldest known. Our knowledge of it has come largely from the sign lists, grammars and exercise tablets, used by the Sumerians themselves in the schools that were attached to the temples. Here the young priests were taught the elements of reading, writing and 'rithmetic, and thus became the professional scribes of the time. Writing was too complicated for ordinary men and became the monopoly of the privileged few.

While engaged in this laborious task of learning to write, the Sumerians were simplifying their pictures and conventionalizing them. Thus the pictures ceased in course of time to be real pictures at all, becoming at first semi-pictographic and then nothing but signs, with little or no resemblance to the original pictures. In this latest stage of development they consisted of a collection of wedge-shaped lines, to make the writing known as cuneiform, from the Latin word *cuneus*, meaning "wedge." The Sumerians had discovered that it is difficult to draw a line on wet clay because it pulls, but very easy to press the stylus down on the clay to make a line. In doing this, however, the scribe had to make the line deeper and wider at its beginning and thus arose the wedge-shaped lines that make up the signs. Writing was no simple matter for the Sumerians. They had to know several hundred different signs,

most of which had many different values and could be used as words or syllables, and some as vowels. It was a complicated system, but it spread nevertheless like wild-fire to other peoples, so that most of the languages of the ancient Near East came in course of time to be written in it.

But before the actual script had spread to other peoples the idea of writing had been carried to Egypt. It used to be thought that the Egyptians were the inventors of writing, but we know now that they must have got the idea from the Sumerians: but not the actual system of writing, because they developed a system of their own. It was pictographic, like the Sumerian system, but the pictures were different and they were scratched on wood and stone. Paralleling the Sumerian development, these pictures came to be given syllabic values as well as word values. Unfortunately, however, none were used as vowels, but twenty-four of them were used to represent roots of one consonant only, and so they came to represent the twenty-four consonants that were found in the language. The result is that we can spell out the consonants in every Egyptian word, but without the vowels we cannot pronounce it. The vowels are not represented and so we have to guess at them. The result of this is that there is no agreement at all among Egyptologists as to how Egyptian words are to be vocalized and each follows his own vocalization, to the utter confusion of the layman. But this does not matter much to the specialist, because it is the consonants and not the vowels that are significant in Egyptian, as it is in the Semitic languages generally, with which Egyptian belongs.

While the Egyptians were learning to write, they made another important discovery. They found out that they could make an excellent ink for writing by taking the soot off their cooking pots and mixing it in water, thickened with a little vegetable gum. Dipping a pointed reed into this mixture, they found that they could use this to write the signs much more easily than by scratching them in. Presently they discovered that they could make the matter still easier. Along the river Nile grew in abundance a reed known as the papyrus, which could be split into thin strips and pasted together in such a way as to make a smooth, tough, straw-coloured paper. And so it was in this way that pen, ink and paper came into existence, all of which we owe to the Egyptians, and paper

still bears its ancient name, which is nothing but our form of the early word "papyrus."

The picture writing of the Egyptians is known to us as hieroglyphic, meaning "sacred writing," because the scribes were almost exclusively priests, as they were in Sumer. As in the case of Sumerian, the early picture writing was later conventionalized and simplified. In this form it is known to us as hieratic, and this presently developed into what we call demotic. In a sense hieroglyphic corresponds to our printed writing, hieratic to our handwriting, and demotic to our shorthand. Egyptian, like most Semitic languages, was usually written from right to left, but sometimes in columns, like Chinese, whereas Sumerian was regularly written in the same direction as our own language.

Another land to which the idea of writing spread from Sumer was the Indus valley in north-west India, but it took the idea considerably longer to reach far-away India than it did Egypt. As a result of recent excavations in India we know that there were at least four cultures antedating the coming of the Aryans. The earliest at present known is called the Amri culture, but it is not until about 3000 B.C., with the coming of the so-called Harappa culture, that we have the introduction of writing, confined almost wholly to seals.[3] Like early Sumerian and Egyptian, this too was a picture writing, but that is really all we can say of it, because it has not yet been deciphered. Since only about two hundred and fifty signs appear in the writing, it must already have been well advanced in its development, reflecting the very high culture of the people who used it. The startling fact is that it disappeared with the Harappa people and not a single specimen has so far been discovered after their time. The two following cultures are wholly devoid of writing, even though the first of these was of a high order, well developed and rich. That writing in early India should have been confined to the Harappa period, *c.* 3000 to *c.* 2400 B.C., is one of the enigmas of history as yet unsolved.

Thus it was that writing began. It had its origin in Sumer about 3500 B.C., and from there it spread rather soon to Egypt in the west and somewhat later to India in the east. It was not the actual system of writing that was borrowed, but simply the idea of writing. Each country worked out its own particular

[3]Published by Sir John Marshall, *Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization* (1931).

system, based upon its own local material. Thus writing began, but this was not the source of our writing, which is alphabetic, as that of ancient Sumer, Egypt and India was not. Our writing goes back to the alphabet, and its origin is quite another story.

II

The story of the alphabet is one of the romantic chapters of human history. The word itself, as everyone knows, comes from the names of the first two letters of the Greek alphabet, "alpha, beta"; and these two letters in turn take their names from the same letters in the Semitic alphabet, "aleph, bet." This suggests that our alphabet came to us from the Semites by way of the Greeks, and that is exactly what happened. It is to the Semites that we owe the invention of the alphabet and our own writing, but to a most unexpected quarter of the Semitic world.

As we have already noted, the beginning of writing came with the Sumerians in Mesopotamia, *c.* 3500 B.C., and the idea spread quickly from there to the Egyptians in the west and somewhat later to India in the east, but this earliest writing was sign-writing and not alphabetic at all. The scripts of Sumer, Egypt and India all consisted of many different signs, to be read as words or syllables, but not as letters. The Egyptian script, however, did develop a kind of alphabet, because twenty-four of the signs used in the script represented roots of one consonant only; so they came to represent the twenty-four consonants that were found in the language. The Egyptians had a grand opportunity here to take a step that would have revolutionized writing for the whole world. If they had only known it, they could have thrown away their cumbersome hieroglyphic system entirely and have written their language in a simple alphabet of these twenty-four signs. But they were not subtle enough to make the discovery. It was this incipient alphabet of the Egyptians, however, which was destined in the course of time to furnish the idea for the creation of a true alphabetic system, and that system originated, rather oddly, on Egyptian soil, but not with the Egyptians. It originated with the Semitic workmen employed by the Egyptians in the turquoise mines at Serabit on the Sinaitic peninsula, about fifty miles from the traditional site of Mount Sinai. It is strange, but nevertheless true, that it is these ordinary, unlettered Semitic miners at Serabit that we have to thank for the earliest known alphabetic writing, dating back from

the time of the twelfth dynasty in Egypt, *c.* 1800 B.C. Their rudely carved inscriptions were discovered by Sir Flinders Petrie thirty-five years ago,[4] but it was only recently that their true significance came to be known, and they are still in the process of being deciphered. These uncouth Semitic miners felt the very human urge to scratch their names on the rocks of the mine shafts, accompanying their names with prayers for protection and blessing to their several deities, particularly the goddess Ba'alat, the female counterpart of the god Ba'al or Baal, so often mentioned in the Old Testament. The Egyptian hieroglyphic writing was much too complicated for these simple miners; so they hit upon the happy device of making writing simple by taking certain Egyptian signs or inventing some of their own and making each in turn stand for the initial letter of the name of the sign in their own Semitic language; that is to say, the acrophonic principle was followed. For example, the sign picturing a house was called by its Semitic name "bet," meaning "house," and made to stand for the initial letter *b*, and so with all the other letters of the Semitic alphabet. Necessity is the mother of invention, and in this instance it was the simple-mindedness of these early Semitic miners that forced them to work out a system of writing that was simple enough for them, and true alphabetic writing was the result!

The Serabit inscriptions are written in a dialect of Phoenician, and it is to be noted at once that the consonants only are written, and not the vowels. This is true of all the Semitic scripts and not simply of the Serabit inscriptions. And the acrophonic principle is responsible for this. In the Semitic languages all words could originally begin only with a consonant. Accordingly, in applying the acrophonic principle a sign was developed for every sound with which any word began, but since no word began with a vowel, there could be no signs for the vowels, and so the vowels had to be left unindicated. It would be like writing "man" in English as "mn" and "woman" as "wmn." But after all, it is the consonants that are important in the Semitic languages and they can be interpreted almost as easily without vowel indications as with them. Without vowel signs the words cannot always be pronounced with absolute accuracy, but so long as the languages continued to be spoken that did not matter because the pronunciation could be handed down

[4]See his *Researches in Sinai* (1906), 129 ff.; also R. F. Butin *et al.* in *Harvard Theological Review*, XXI, 1928, 1-16; XXV, 1932, 95-203.

by word of mouth, as it is in all languages, including our own. In a later stage when most of the Semitic languages were on the point of dying out, in certain dialects like Hebrew, Syriac and Arabic the vowels came to be represented by a system of points written above and below the consonants. It is from this late vocalization and from the writing of certain Semitic dialects in cuneiform, where the vowels are indicated, that we are able to determine with almost complete accuracy what vowels belong to any word no matter where it is found.

We have already noted that the Serabit inscriptions have not yet been completely deciphered. A German scholar by the name of Grimme once professed to find references in them to the Hebrew god Jehovah, or more properly Yahweh, and to Moses and his experiences in Egypt and at Mount Sinai.[5] These very wild speculations got great publicity at the time, but they turned out to be totally false and have no foundation in fact whatsoever.

Once the alphabet was invented it spread rapidly into South Arabia and north into Palestine and Syria. Rather strangely, discoveries on particular problems often seem to turn up together. Before the discovery of the Serabit inscriptions we had practically no ancient inscriptions from Palestine and Syria, but just at the time that the Serabit inscriptions were engaging our attention a whole series of inscriptions representing every period of later writing were excavated at various sites, particularly at Gezer and Lachish in Palestine and at Byblos in Syria.[6] The result is that we can now trace the very interesting development of the alphabet from its earliest to its latest form and see it changing with the years in different parts of the country. The latest and most dramatic of these discoveries was the finding of eighteen letters written from army outposts to the officer in command of the garrison defending the city of Lachish against the attacks of the Babylonians in 589 B.C.[7] These letters thus belong to the period of Jeremiah and for the first time show us exactly the kind of script used in his day—the kind of script in which his sermons were written down by Baruch. The letters were written in ink on pottery sherds and so

[5]H. Grimme, *Die Lösung des Sinaischriftproblems* (1926).

[6]Listed, e.g., by J. W. Flight in *The Haverford Symposium on Archaeology and the Bible*, edited by E. Grant (1938), 123 f.

[7]Published by H. Torczyner, L. Harding, A. Lewis, and J. L. Starkey, *Lachish I: The Lachish Letters* (1938).

have been preserved to us. Most of the writing done in Palestine and Syria was on papyrus and for that reason has unfortunately been lost. In Egypt the dry climate and lack of rain have made possible the preservation of hundreds of papyrus rolls, but the winter rains of Palestine and Syria have made that impossible there. Hence it is not likely that we shall ever find any part of the Old Testament originals in the excavations, but this of course is always a possibility.

Besides the regular Semitic alphabet another of totally different character, but dependent upon it, has turned up in very recent years. One of the thrills of archaeology is that you never know what you are going to find, and when least expected something totally strange and unique may be uncovered. This happened in the case of the alphabet, for in the French excavations at Ras Shamra, on the Syrian coast about one hundred and twenty miles north of Beirut, the excavators suddenly came upon a whole collection of clay tablets belonging to the fifteenth century B.C., the like of which had never been seen before.[8] They were written in cuneiform, but not in the accepted cuneiform script of the time. Despite the fact that alphabetic writing was used extensively throughout the Near East and was much simpler than the complicated cuneiform system, with its hundreds of signs and many values for each sign, the cuneiform script was nevertheless a keen rival of the alphabetic and seems to have been used even more extensively. It was to bridge the gap between the two systems that the Ras Shamra script was invented, because it has the alphabet written in cuneiform, i.e., each letter of the alphabet is represented by a sign composed of wedge-shaped lines written on clay. The language of the inscriptions turned out to be an early form of Semitic, closely allied to Hebrew, and the tablets have thrown a flood of light, not only on the history of the alphabet, but on the Old Testament itself in practically all its phases, with many expressions in the two appearing in identical words.

Such in brief is the history of the alphabet in the Semitic world. But how did it get to us? Manifestly from the Phoenicians by way of the Greeks. But the Greek alphabet, from which our own is derived, has vowels, as no Semitic alphabet has. The explanation of this anomaly is once again the acrophonic principle. For

[8]Published by C. Virolleaud in recent numbers of *Syria* and in recent volumes of *Bibliothèque archéologique et historique.*

example, the Greeks took over the first letter of the Semitic alphabet, which represented the head of an ox, and they took over its name, *'aleph* which is the Semitic word for "ox." But the first sound in *'aleph* was to them, not a guttural consonant, as it was to the Semites, but the vowel *a*. Thus the value of that sign was to the Greeks the vowel *a*, and so it is with us. In the same way the other vowels were introduced and for certain letters in their own language which were not in the Semitic alphabet they manufactured signs on the analogy of the Semitic alphabet. It is not known exactly when the alphabet came to the Greeks, but recent considerations seem to indicate some time in the eighth century B.C.

This then is the story of alphabetic writing. It originated in the simple but fertile minds of Semitic workmen at Serabit on the Sinaitic peninsula, *c.* 1800 B.C. From there it spread the length and breadth of the Semitic world, and then presently throughout the whole world, so that all the alphabets of the world, some two hundred in number, are descended in one way or another from the primitive alphabet of Serabit. It goes to show what mighty oaks from little acorns spring and how a tiny group of unlettered folk, quite unnoticed and alone, could revolutionize the whole course of writing for the world, with consequences that no man can calculate.

THE WAR AND OPINION

I. AN ALLIANCE WITH RUSSIA?

CLARIS EDWIN SILCOX

SINCE the last war, much has been done on this continent to stimulate a desire for education in international affairs. Study groups sought "objectivity," listened attentively to addresses, participated in discussions and goodwill conferences—and often became more confused than ever. Parties went abroad to see for themselves, and to get the "feel" of the country. All this was highly idealistic and commendable, even if many of the tourists did not attain the desired "real understanding." Too often they saw only what those who planned the tours felt that they should see. Frequently they visited only the great cities where the people were quite atypical of the country as a whole. They talked with a few delightful and cultured people who happened to know English and had all the right answers to their queries, but they failed to sound out the opinions of the more usual type of "native" because they could not have understood what he said anyway. And for the most part, they took with them a scale of values by which they judged progress, and eventually returned home more than ever convinced of the superiority of the North American way of life. Many, far too many, wrote books on their travels, even though they may have remained but a few weeks in a country described. But newspaper correspondents stayed longer. They fed us regularly with interpretations of significant events in strange countries, and on their return to this hemisphere have published racy volumes giving accounts of their experiences and inspiring even more people with the desire to travel and to see for themselves.

Some countries were treated more fully than others. For instance, there were more books on Czecho-Slovakia than on Roumania; more on Palestine than on Turkey. The population of Poland was thirty-five million, but while there was an extensive literature in French on Poland, there was relatively little material in English. When the Russo-Finnish war broke out, few books were available describing Finland, its people, its resources, its cultural attainments. The new and smaller Baltic states, such as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, were almost unknown. After the Spanish revolution, modern interpretations of Spain became relatively plentiful, even if markedly biased. Books about Mussolini's

Italy and Hitler's Germany poured from the press. But since 1917, no country in the world has had more written about it than Russia. Despite all this, perhaps no country remains today so much of an enigma as Russia. Sherwood Eddy, for instance, led groups of pilgrims almost annually to Moscow, but in a recent article, in *Christianity and Crisis*, he had to confess that after his last visit he had found it "the most fascinating yet the most irritating country in the world." Russia remains for most of us the Great Unknown.

§1. Why Russia is Unknown

In the first place, Russia is an immense country, covering one-sixth of the entire land surface of the world, and this whole territory is of one piece. To traverse so vast a country would take much time even with the most modern methods of transportation, and transport in Russia has always left much to seek. In the second place, there are language difficulties. A traveller in a foreign country misses much that is most important if he is unable to read, and especially to speak, the language of the people. But it is doubtful if there are in Canada a dozen trained and competent social observers who can speak Russian.

Though the Soviet Republic is so vast in area and population, though Russian literature and art occupy a place in many respects pre-eminent, though Russian trade may easily become all-important in the immediate future, there is yet no chair in the Slavonic languages in Canada's largest university, although it has four colleges which offer parallel courses in ancient Greek, Latin, and Hebrew! This is true although at one time the Professor of Political Economy at Toronto, James Mavor, was recognized as an authority on Russia and, until his death, carried on extensive correspondence with many friends in Russia, and although one of Canada's Rhodes scholars, W. G. Rose, is now recognized as one of the most authoritative writers on matters Slavonic and is the Director of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London.

In the third place, the religious background of Russia has been different from that of the United Kingdom, the United States, or Canada. Russian Orthodoxy has had a long history and, despite the efforts of the Society of the Godless, it is deeply rooted in the Russian people. Nicholas Berdyaev, the eminent Russian philosopher, has stated that Russian Communism is simply Russian Orthodoxy in reverse, and perhaps one reason why we of the western

world have not been able to understand Russian Communism is that we never understood Russian Orthodoxy. Perhaps we shall never understand Russian Communism until we do understand Russian Orthodoxy, and such understanding may possibly be beyond the capacity of the rank and file of Protestant or Roman Catholic scholars.

In the fourth place, when the Russian revolution broke out in 1917, Russia adopted Communism and became officially addicted to the Marxian creed, and that fact introduced a controversy in political, economic, and financial circles, which future historians may regard as the fundamental fact of the first half of the twentieth century. From the outbreak of the revolution, the Russian experiment has been a powerful factor in creating suspicion, unrest, and international uncertainty, all the more potent because Russia was not at first satisfied with effecting the experiment within her own borders but deliberately planned to export it. The Communist Internationale, like the French revolutionists, sought with missionary zeal to share their "blessings" with every other country in the world. Just as the French revolution at first broke other European countries asunder, some of the writers of the time lauding it as the finest example of the eruption of the new spirit and others condemning it as subversive of all that was constitutionally sound, so the Russian revolution divided the world into two groups: its friends and its enemies, those who wished it well and those who wanted to see it fail. Someone has said of the Roman Catholic Church that no one can be neutral towards it: when he ceases to abhor it, he becomes fascinated by it and frequently ends by embracing it. Perhaps, much the same may be said of Communism. One cannot be indifferent to it: one is either for or against. Perhaps, indeed, just as Lincoln once said that the union could not continue half-slave and half-free, the world cannot long avoid making a decision for or against Communism.

However that may be, few of the interpreters of Russia and Russian Communism fail to indicate their bias. At first, most people approved of a revolution in Russia, for, in 1917, it was difficult to see how the bureaucratic government of the Tsars could ever help to "make the world safe for democracy." The fact that the democratic movement was at first socialist did not disturb the world unduly, but when the Mensheviki lost power to the Bolsheviki, and we found out that there was a difference between them,

the general approval of the revolution was tempered with criticism. The first British White Paper on Russia, issued after the *coup* of Lenin, was ominous, and even hinted at the excessive activity of certain Jews in the overthrow of Tsarism—a fear which was later intensified by the publication of the false *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The obvious endeavour of the Bolshevists to make peace with Germany and thus call off the war, and the suspicion that Lenin's return to Russia had been engineered by the Germans, was also a factor in deepening the suspicion.

At all events, in 1919, the peacemongers at Versailles found the position of Russia one of the most disturbing elements in the situation confronting them. Mr Lloyd George, in *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, devotes a whole chapter to this phase of the situation. He tells of the "powerful pertinacious influences in the Cabinet working for military intervention in Russia, and [he adds] as I was not on the spot in London to direct influence and control over the situation, for a while I was out-manoeuvred, and Mr. Bonar Law, who presided over the Ministers in my absence, was overridden. Mr. Winston Churchill in particular threw the whole of his dynamic energy and genius into organizing an armed intervention against the Russian Bolshevist power." Mr Churchill seemed partly successful in his plan, but Mr Lloyd George claims that he was able to secure from him three limitations to his schemes:

> (1) There must be no attempt to conquer Bolshevik Russia by force of arms. (2) Support would be continued only as long as it was clear that in the areas controlled by Kolchak and Denikin the population was anti-Bolshevik in sentiment. (3) The anti-Bolshevik armies must not be used to restore the old Czarist regime. I emphasized especially the importance of not reimposing on the peasants the old feudal conditions under which they held their land.

One knows how the interventionist plans failed, and now, the mills of the gods having ground slowly, we find Mr Churchill allied with the successors of Lenin in an attempt to stop the Nazi menace, while men like Max Eastman, who once edited *The Masses*, today pour contempt on Russian socialism!

§2. The Fear of Communism

Some future applicant for a doctorate may find an attractive thesis in the development of public opinion in respect to Russia between 1917 and 1941, especially as indicated in the contemporary literature of the English-speaking world. His great difficulty, of

course, would be the wealth of material available. In the United States, one of the first important books was that written by John Spargo in 1919, entitled *Bolshevism and the United States*. Spargo, the socialist, attacked Bolshevism and insisted that Lenin was the "Treitschke of social revolt, brutal, relentless and unscrupulous, glorying in might which is, for him, the only right." Bolshevism, he urged, must be overcome, but "this can best be done, not by attempting to drown it in blood, but by courageously and consistently setting ourselves to the task of removing the social oppression, the poverty and the servitude which produces the desperation of soul that drives men to Bolshevism." Charles Edward Russell gave a similar warning: "Let the existing governments of the world turn to war on Bolshevism and they will make Bolshevism the passionate creed of millions that now care nothing for it. . . . Empty bellies will hear naught of reason. It is to starving men that Bolshevism preaches most effectively." But even the sound advice of the critics of Bolshevism was not too clearly heard by those who sought the "return to normalcy," and we gaily marched down the third decade of the twentieth century to the *débâcle* of 1929.

Gradually the revolution succeeded, and when it became clear that the Bolshevists had established a *de facto* régime, we admitted it and recognized the new government, but the suspicion did not die. One, if not the main, reason why our relations with Russia never became more cordial was the fact that the Communist parties within our countries became public nuisances. Many who did not and could not approve of doctrinaire Communism were disposed to be sympathetic with Russia and would gladly have supported a policy of reconciliation; but they could not well endure the fulsome eulogies of Russia made by parlour pinks who really knew little about the situation and were so sentimental that they would have put a halo on the devil himself, and they were even more annoyed by the nonsense of the leaders of the Communist parties in North America, who showed themselves entirely deficient in any understanding of the deep spiritual roots of our political and economic life. They could admire Russia; they could even tolerate Communism as one possible method of social organization; but they could not abide their native-born Communists. If these Communists think so much of Russia, they said, let them go and live there and find out for themselves. Some of the Communists did and returned from their assignments in Utopia disillusioned. If occasionally the more con-

servative voted for Communist candidates in Canada, it was not because they approved of them, but because by so voting they registered an even greater contempt for the Lilliputian politicians who were making our own democratic forms an object of derision. Even now, they are far more sympathetic with Russia than with those blatant members of our community who, a few months ago, were always suggesting that this was an *imperialist war* but have now suddenly discovered what many of us have known for a long time, that it is a *holy crusade*.

Economically, of course, the Russian experiment could not earn the warm appreciation of the *bourgeoisie*, who, in their endeavour to discredit it, completely overlooked the difficulties inherent in a transition from a country overwhelmingly agricultural to an industrialized state, especially when so much of the heavy industry had to be developed for purposes of defence against potential enemies. Every defect in organization, every weakness in technical ability, was emphasized to prove the impossibility of Communism. Even socialist writers expressed their fear of the Stakhanoff or speed-up movements, and the differential in wages paid to those who proved most competent. Our farmers, intense individualists, could not applaud the collective farm, and while, during the depression, we all talked glibly about social security, we failed to recognize the fact that complete social security is incompatible with that individual initiative which provides all workers with the free choice of occupation. It is little wonder that those who believed in the retention of individual initiative and put the moral stamina of the individual and his capacity to make adjustments voluntarily above a five, ten, or hundred-year plan in which every cog in the machine was jammed down in its place, took fright at the very thought of Communism and saw a potential "red" in every man who seemed to suggest even mildly the possibility of some larger measure of social security and some slight attempt to rationalize our own economic structure. What was more, it was far easier to see the evil effects of the curtailment of individual initiative in Russia than in North America, where an overwhelming majority of factory workers are only "hands" and nothing more.

Perhaps, however, an even greater suspicion of Russia and Communism came from religious bodies and religious leadership. The Russian theologians in exile in Paris treated Communism critically, but with detachment and understanding. An occasional

Protestant leader became infatuated with the new freedom in Russia and overdid the effort to be generous. But the Roman Catholic Church as a whole declared a spiritual warfare on both Russia and Communism, and Russia and Communism not only reciprocated this Catholic hostility, but provided much justification for it. For the campaign of the Society of the Godless, with its puerility and its apparent endorsation by high leadership in the Communist party, offered plenty of facts to warrant the hostility of the Church. Fundamentally the opposition of the Church and Communism may have been inevitable, but it may also have been a good thing for both. The Church was forced to consider the implications of religion for the solution of our social difficulties as an alternative to Communist proposals, while Communists of late may have discovered a vitality they had not anticipated in the vendors of "opiates for the people." At all events, about four years ago, the Communists did seek to form a united front with some social-gospel leaders in the Protestant churches in America, on a basis of those social reforms which both Communists and the social gospellers equally desired, but it was impracticable for any church to establish an official relationship with those whose fundamental postulate was framed in terms of an inevitable class warfare and whose open policy stopped at nothing which might condition the minds of youth against all religion and all traditional religious values. It was, nevertheless, most unfortunate that antagonism to Communism became, with some leaders of the Church, a veritable obsession, and the obsession became more dangerous to organized religion than to Communism.

§3. As War-Clouds Lowered

At the time of Munich, many forward-looking souls were troubled partly because of the unheroic surrender by the Chamberlain government, and partly because, on the whole, it seemed that the attitude of Russia was far more consistent and praiseworthy than that of Britain. Indeed, they trembled for Britain's moral leadership of the world, and feared that that leadership had been surrendered to Russia. Russia had been deliberately left out of any plans made by the "four powers" for Czecho-Slovakia, and when in private discussion some of us enlarged on these fears, the only consolation we received was the allegation that Russia was undependable. Had she not just been forced to liquidate a vast horde of her army

leaders? The morale of her army, we were assured, had been shattered; her equipment was spectacular but inefficient. She would prove a weak reed, and her aid only an embarrassment. This may or may not have been true. Certainly, few of us were enamoured with the high *politique* of Josef Stalin.

Then, in the post-Munich days, as we felt the dark clouds descending on Europe, we instinctively phrased the impending conflict as one of democracy versus totalitarianism, and there did not seem to be much to choose between Nazi, Fascist, and Communist ideology. The suspicion of Russia deepened, of course, with the cynical conclusion of the treaty between Russia and Germany a few weeks before the outbreak of war; it was somewhat eased when Stalin's army rolled smoothly into Eastern Poland and Bessarabia, thus blocking for the time any further German advance, but then grew blacker than ever with the seemingly heartless attack on Finland.

Those of us who had been in Finland knew, of course, the relative strength of German influence in that country. In the public park in Helsinki there were two monuments, one to the Finns who had achieved their independence from Russia in 1918, and the other to the German troops who had come to the help of the Finns against the Russians at that time. We knew, too, how allergic Finland was to Russia. Once, in the summer of 1926, we had looked out of the window of our hotel in Helsinki and seen the streets suddenly filled with soldiery. We had gone out to pick up the news and purchased from a newsboy a funny little "extra" with the story that a counter-revolution had broken out in Russia. This false alarm was all that was needed to fill the streets at once with men in uniform. But we did not fully realize the threat to Leningrad which the existing Finnish borders and the Mannerheim line offered, nor could most of us appreciate why Stalin may have deemed a relief from this threat necessary in the light of possible further designs on Russia by Germany, so openly announced in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. To most of us the attack on Finland was just another episode in the attack of totalitarianism on democracy, callous, heartless, and unnecessary. If at the time of Munich we had wondered whether Russia were not to inherit the moral leadership of the world, we now saw that she had thrown all such chances away again.

In the diplomatic tug-of-war in the Balkans, and over Turkey, the issues became more confused, but as the war lagged on, it became

clear that if Germany were foiled in her effort to subdue Britain, she would of necessity have to turn on Russia, and apparently Russia was quite well aware of it all the time and was feverishly preparing for the onslaught. As we saw it coming, we feared the reaction of public opinion on this continent and among the anti-Communist groups in England. For then the war would no longer be a pure struggle of democracy versus totalitarianism. Its ideological structure would be confused, and we suspected that Hitler would endeavour to add to the confusion by appealing to the anti-Communist world as the bright St George in shining armour going forth to slay the "Red" dragon.

Fortunately, when the Nazi armies flung themselves against Russia, his ideological propaganda failed. The Pope's message to the world calmly ignored the "crusade against Communism," and Mr Churchill's prompt address stabilized public opinion. While he refused to take back a single word which he had previously uttered against Communism, he announced that Britain would back Russia to the limit. The British Broadcasting Corporation might have found it difficult to play the "Internationale" among the national anthems of the Allies, especially as it contains what some might consider a gratuitous insult to the Christian religion:

> We want no condescending Saviour
> To rule us from the judgment hall,
> We workers ask not for their favours,
> Let us consult for all.

But generally speaking, the British people seem to have accepted the association with Russia with high satisfaction and with relief.

§4. Opinion in the United Kingdom

Of course, there have always been strong supporters of Russia in the United Kingdom. H. G. Wells, Bernard Shaw, Sir Stafford Cripps, Beatrice and Sidney Webb had written much in approbation of the Russian experiment. Just before the outbreak of hostilities between Russia and Germany, the irrepressible Dean of Canterbury, Dr Hewlett Johnson, published his *Soviet Power*—a radiant panegyric on Russia. D. N. Pritt, K.C., M.P., in two of the Penguin specials, *Light on Moscow* and *Must the War Spread?*, had defended Soviet policy and warned the British government against fomenting a "war of rival ideologies." But Communism in general, and Russian Communism in particular, had also its severe critics in England.

Despite this, the reaction seemed fairly unanimous if one is to judge by the press. One thing was clear: the British people knew who their enemy was and what his ultimate plans for Britain were. At all events, an unequivocal statement from the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster was published in the *Catholic Herald* (July 4): "Our country with our allies is fighting against the immediate Nazi attempt to subjugate Europe. No one who knows how anti-Christian the ideas and practices of the Nazis are will for one moment be deceived by Hitler's latest pose as the champion of European civilization, or think that it has become in any way less vital to resist his attempt to enslave the continent." The Catholic papers of England were equally clear in their analysis of the situation. Thus, the influential *Tablet* (June 28) said: "Stalin's outlook and policy are quite irreconcilable with the ideals of liberty and civilized order for which we are fighting, and there can be no question of an alliance. But there is today a great common object, the defeat of a man and a system which is much more efficient than Stalin's communism, and much more of an immediate danger to us all. We must keep rigidly to the military common object, and have nothing to do with any temptations to pretend that what divides us from the Soviet Government is a less profound and unbridgeable gulf than it is." The *Catholic Gazette* (July) found two goods arising in the clash between "two evil agents": "First, the weakening of both, and especially of the immediately devastating one, the Nazi. Secondly, the avowal by our Premier and by our Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that communism, the system of official Russia, is definitely repudiated, and that we are in no way committed to it by this recent political action of promising military aid. . . . The present development may, for all we know at present, be the beginning of the liberation of Russia; and if Russia becomes the instrument of effectually weakening the Nazi machine, it may also be the beginning of the liberation of the Germans." The *Weekly Review* (formerly *GK's Weekly*, though not considered officially a Catholic paper) quotes with approval a reader who contributes the following (July 3):

> The anti-Moscow policy appears to me ruled out for the time being. In my view, it was frequently irrelevant and always too narrow. It brought you strange allies. All the rich everywhere, the big corporations, the powerful Jews, Press lords, nazi gangsters, who hate religion, and fascist scoundrels whose only use for religion is as a mask . . . they were all with you and prepared to use you. Now, my simple suggestion is, stand out as the friend and protector of the oppressed

everywhere—irrespective of race or religion or nationality—and attack their oppressors likewise irrespectively. Your enemy will then not be just some doctrine or slogan (like atheism or communism and the like)—but people and organizations who trample on the poor wherever and whatever they may be and however God-fearing they proclaim themselves. Your enemies will be selected for their deeds and not for their pious or impious words. They may even be the churches if these are rich and oppressive as too often in the past they have been: alas! But your paper may then become the salt of the journalistic world in England and your friends will be the needy and the downtrodden everywhere, and incidentally, all true Christians.

The Anglican pronouncements were not unexpected. The Archbishop of Canterbury answered some objections to the support of Russia and added: "It may well be that Russia's defence of its own land and the new unity which this will bring may lead to a new tolerance of religion by the Soviet government, and a new resurgence of the interests of religion, always deep-seated in the heart of the Russian people." The Archbishop of York, while admitting that there was much in the present order in Russia which no Christian could approve, went on to say: "Personally, I have always thought bolshevism preferable to nazism, because its goal of universal fellowship is part of the Christian hope, though its method of trying to reach its goal is in my judgment bound to frustrate its own object. The goal of nazism is itself flatly unchristian." He also expressed the hope that Russia's "union with us who, however unworthily, stand for keeping open the possibility of Christian civilization, may lead to the withering and at last to the repudiation of her official godlessness."

A rarely beautiful plea for the better understanding of Russia appeared in the *British Weekly* (Aug. 21) from the pen of Dr John A. Hutton, its editor. He urged the British people to repel the attitude of mind that refuses to think out the case of Russia: not to seek to understand would be base ingratitude, sheer wickedness, and rank stupidity. He reminds his readers of the indebtedness of Europe to Russia since for centuries it defended the gates of Europe from Eastern hordes:

> Had there been no Russia from the sixth century to the twelfth, to impede the waves that poured through that gap between the Ural mountains and the Caspian Sea, there would have been no orderly society in Europe, there would have been no beginnings even of orderly society in Europe for all that space of time. . . . The sins and faults and crimes of Russia, whilst nothing can justify sin and crime in them or us, are chargeable almost entirely to centuries of despotic and brutal and inconsiderate government. . . . When the long bitterness of isolation passes from the soul of Russia, there may return a wonderful gentleness and compunction.

Thus, following the Prime Minister's lead, the British people have been advised by their religious leaders to allow their sympathy for the Russian people to dominate their suspicion of Communism.

§5. Opinion in the United States

The attitude in the United States was at first more dubious. It was clear that the isolationist and pacifist forces would find in the entrance of Russia into the war a fresh opportunity to confuse the clear moral issues even more. And they did. In the *Catholic World* (May, 1941) the editor, Father James Gillis, had a long article entitled "Russia as an Ally," in which he quoted with approval some ancient slogan: "I love my cause but I would see it perish rather than save it with an ungodly alliance." "To defend democracy with the help of Stalin," he said, "would be like calling in Jesse James or John Dillinger to maintain law and order." He had just read an advertisement of Dean Hewlett Johnson's *The Soviet Power* and he poured vitriol on "the poor simpleton" and "doddering cleric." He suggested that, to offset this sentimentalism, it would be well to read Eugene Lyons's review of several new books in the *American Mercury* for April, 1941: Freda Utley's *The Dream We Lost*, Jan Valtin's *Out of the Night*, and Manya Gordon's *Workers before and after Lenin*. Then he called attention to some of the blasphemous things exhibited in the Anti-Religious Museum in Moscow, and asked: "Shall Moscow and Washington shake hands, make an alliance and fight together? If ever that comes to pass—God forbid—I think it the duty of every Christian to shout from the housetops that our Church, our religion and our God have been betrayed. If we Catholic speakers and writers do not continue to say so after we get into the war you may know that someone has silenced us." He also wrote on "The Covenant with Hell."

It is quite probable that a considerable section of Catholic opinion in the United States approved Father Gillis's point of view, but certainly not all. Bishop Hurley of St Augustine, Florida, in a radio address on July 6, dealt with the larger issues and in closing considered the new situation created by Russia's entrance into the war:

> The Nazi and his sympathizers over here are trying to make out that it is a holy crusade against Communism. Crusade forsooth; not God, but the enemy of God wills it; its standard is not the Cross but the swastika which a great Pontiff called the foe of the Cross of Christ; the rape of Poland is scarcely a

recommendation for Christian Knights; and the recluse of Berchtesgaden is badly cast for the role of Peter the Hermit. The bald facts of the "crusade" are these: on Sunday morning, June 22, the Nazis, in violation of a treaty, launched an unprovoked and undeclared war of aggression against the Communists, their former partners in crime. America's attitude toward this new war should not be swayed by Red or Nazi propaganda; it must be based on purely strategic considerations. In point of urgency the Nazi remains Enemy No. 1 of America and of the world. . . .

I have no confidence in those who reserve all fault-finding for America and who praise the Nazi with faint condemnation. . . . Among them is a small group of Catholics. We have suffered long from their tantrums. We have blushed with shame when they acted up before company as tantrum children will do in every family. Years ago they established the crank school of economics; latterly they have founded the tirade school of journalism; they are now engaged in popularizing the ostrich school of strategy. The school may change its curriculum, but the same professors hold the chairs for they are specialists in the universe of knowledge. Many Catholics are inclined to apologize for them; but I think that is unwise. They are embarrassing, but not significant and quite harmless as long as their tantrums do not lead them to break the furniture. They will disappear in time like those other exhibitionists—the marathon dancer and the flag-pole sitters—who amused America for a while and vanished.

Some members of the hierarchy spoke on the other side with vehemence and intransigence, and Archbishop Beckman of Dubuque, Iowa, in a national broadcast on July 27, disavowed Bishop Hurley's reasoning and called all Catholics in the United States to the isolationist banners. Moderates, however, saw the deeper issue although they phrased it with restraint. Thus the *Commonweal* (Aug. 15), while frankly fearing that after the Nazis are beaten, the "enduring temptation of communist thought" may be "the menace of our age," adds with rare insight: "Against that threat and that temptation, all Catholics and all free men will stand firm. But if we are destined to combat communism until it, too, is broken in its organizations and in our minds and in the distress and injustice from which it evolves, we must not take our stand in the cold, lonely abstention of doctrinaire self-interest. There must be no untouchables, no pariahs. Behind the veil of the systems men are living and dying. We cannot reach the thousands in Germany with whom we would speak. We will reach them later. *We can reach now deep into the conscience and the hopes of the Russians.*"

In Protestant journals, the two most significant statements appeared in *Christianity and Crisis* (July 28) when Sherwood Eddy dealt with "Russia in the World Crisis." He sought to interpret

Russia and expressed his faith that Russia, despite its shortcomings, was bound to make a contribution to the world comparable to that of the French Revolution:

> It would be unfair to emphasize only what seem to be the evils in Soviet Russia and to be silent concerning the significance of the great experiment. As I see it, there are two major political and economic experiments in the world today—the Soviet experiment, based on the principle of justice, and the Anglo-Saxon experiment in liberty. The Soviets' ideal and aim is justice, without much liberty.... Here we have liberty without much justice for the under-privileged. In my judgment, neither system can succeed nor should succeed as it is today.... I believe that economic justice will be almost as impossible under the system of "rugged individualism" of capitalist America, as liberty under Stalin's totalitarian dictatorship.... In conclusion let us remember that America has one and only one enemy in this war. It is Hitler and Nazism that now menaces America and the world.

The most amazing article appeared in the *Christian Century* (Aug. 13), which is decidedly non-interventionist. It is from the pen of Henry N. Wieman, Professor of the Philosophy of Religion at the University of Chicago. At the outbreak of the war, he had written urging that the United States keep aloof. He still shows no symptom of any enthusiasm for "saving Britain." But he acknowledges that the situation has changed, and while he disapproves of Communism, he proposes that now "we join with Russia and in that way enter the war." His argument might be reduced to this:

> This war was caused by the hate, fear and hostility between the democracies on the one hand and Russian communism on the other.... The Russians did everything in their power to work with the democracies to protect themselves and the rest of us against Hitler. The leaders of the democracies played a treacherous game with Stalin, trying to get him caught in a trap where he would have to fight the nazis. They refused to cooperate.... Hitler's power and opportunity to start this war were given to him by the fear, hate and unremitting hostility of the democracies against communism.... If the English-speaking peoples stand together but do not stand with Russia, the fear and hate and hostility that started this war will start another, much worse than this one.... The only way I can see to reduce this bitterness beneath the danger-point is to do three things. Stand shoulder to shoulder with Russia in a desperate struggle against a common foe. Send our commissions, our representative men, our resources and our advices to them and allow them to reciprocate. Finally, having thus fought together and having thus entered into the closest possible interchange of thoughts, plans, supplies, representatives, we shall sit down together at the conference table to plan the world for peace.... Mighty coercions toward community will begin to work if we enter this war with Russia and do everything in our power to help her win.

§6. Opinion in Canada

Turning to Canada, one is surprised to find in the French-Canadian press so little adverse criticism of the pledge of aid to Russia. The lead given by Mr Churchill was generally followed, some of the papers hoping at first that the struggle might perhaps so exhaust both Nazis and Communists that we should have little difficulty later with either of them. While they still were opposed to the atheistic materialism of Communism, they recognized the real enemy of Canada and of their faith as what it is—the Nazis. Certain of the Toronto papers, while grateful for the help which Russia would give, were at first somewhat sceptical of her power to resist and some editorials betrayed the continuing deep-grained suspicion of the Soviet. The *Globe and Mail*, in an editorial note on July 23, announced in a penitent mood that it had "decided to discontinue the practice of referring to the Russians as 'Reds.' The term, which implies infection with a dangerous revolutionary spirit, has come to be used in a contemptuous and derogatory sense, and it seems to us that it should no longer be applied to people who have been officially accepted by Mr. Churchill as our allies, and who are putting up a very valiant fight against Hitler's hordes." On August 26, it was praising "Russia's Glorious Fight"; on September 9, it was asking the Prime Minister of Canada "Why Still Boycott Russia?" when we continued to furnish full diplomatic privileges to the representatives of Vichy at Ottawa; on September 17, a long editorial praised Dean Hewlett Johnson's *Soviet Power*.

There have been few striking opinions on Russia expressed in the Canadian pulpit or in the Canadian press. The alliance has, on the whole, been taken for granted, and the deeper issues treated with typical Canadian caution. The British-Israelites warned "both leaders and peoples that an alliance with Moscow is fraught with the possibility of disaster." They did so apparently on the basis of prophecy. Dr Peter Bryce, one-time Moderator of the United Church, published a plea for Russia in the *Toronto Star* for September 22. Perhaps the soundest word on the subject appeared several months before the war began in the *Catholic Register* of Toronto (April 13, 1939). The editorial is entitled "The Red Flag and the Swastika," and the editor hopes that Polish-Russian co-operation may be effected against German aggression. He admits the existence of Catholic objections to such an alliance, but brushes these aside:

To wage war in alliance with unbelievers has never been forbidden to Catholics as intrinsically wrong and examples of such alliances are innumerable. No Catholic authority challenged the employment by Franco of Moslem troops. The principle under study is what moralists call the Principle of Double Effect, that is, whether an act in itself moral, and performed for a good purpose, is moral although it is foreseen that it may have bad as well as good consequences. Briefly, the guiding rule given by Catholic moralists is that there must be a proportion between the good effect which is willed and the evil consequence which is risked, there must be a sufficiently grave cause for permitting or risking the evil conquence.

The editor goes on to say that Nazism is a greater peril than Communism, and that in such a war the anti-religious prejudice of Russian Communism might be destroyed.

* * *

On the whole, it is fairly clear that opinion in religious circles on the issue of providing all possible aid to Russia, is sound; and that the present provides such an opportunity as may never come again, since it permits us to "reach deep into the conscience and hopes of the Russians."

II. CANADA THE "INTERPRETER." GEORGE V. FERGUSON

IT is a fact that the average American is very ill informed about Canada. There are many striking exceptions to this general statement, but it is a fact nevertheless that this average type is far more interested in South America than he is in his northern neighbour, that he makes a greater effort to study its problems, and that in very many cases he actually knows much more about the countries south of the Rio Grande than he does about Canada.

This fact is subject to interpretations both flattering and unflattering. The flattering aspect of the situation is that he strives to know more about South America because he is conscious of its being a problem: Canada is not a problem. He takes it for granted. There is some truth in this. But it is also true that there is a very large number of Americans who consider Canada to be a British colony, subservient in every respect to the Motherland and therefore not worth consideration. Canada is, as it were, a British stooge, ensconced by historic hazard on the North American continent; and the American who believes this—the number is legion—believes, too, that if he knows something about England he knows also all he needs to know about Canada. This is not so good.

Nor is it good at a time when Canada is being loudly called on by after-dinner speakers and other well-meaning citizens to act vigorously in its historic role as "interpreter" between the two great branches of the English-speaking race. Canada, Mr Churchill remarked years ago in a *Saturday Evening Post* article, is "the linch-pin" that joins Britain and the United States. Canada is a "mediator," and so on and so on. For all these statements there is only the slightest basis in historic fact and, when those who utter them are called on for proof, they usually break down after mentioning the intervention of Mr Arthur Meighen over the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1921.

Canada, nevertheless, has a role to play, but that role should be undertaken in the full knowledge that difficulties exist, that in many respects our "interpretations" are imprudent, and that the fact we speak the same tongue as the American people can easily lead us into the belief that the background of their thinking is identical with our own and that words will have the same meaning—and, more important, the same emotional connotation—for them that they have for us. The most obvious example of this kind of thing is the expectation which apparently burns in a certain number of Canadian hearts that the sentiments of loyalty and affection which they feel towards the Crown and the Mother Country should be fully shared by the American people; that the cry, "England is in peril," should make the same emotional appeal to the Ohio farmer as it does to the Bay Street broker.

Those who cherish this belief—and some of them unfortunately have given vent to expressions of this opinion across the line—forget that the grandfather of the gentleman from Ohio quite likely came from Bohemia to the United States about 1860 and that his father and himself have been reared in a school system which has always laid emphasis upon the bloody and revolutionary beginnings of the United States, and has besides paid scant notice to the peaceful evolution to equality of status which has marked the development of the Third British Empire. The relatively uneventful history of Canada in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has rarely produced incidents that have been considered worthy of general interpretation in the United States, which has therefore largely taken Canada for granted and presumed that it is a thoroughly British country in both blood and tradition. Colonially-minded Canadians, by their insistent reiteration of this

same theme, have done both their own country and Great Britain a grave disservice, as any visitor to the United States can today find out for himself.

There, the Canadian visitors find that Canadian belligerency is taken for granted because Canada is considered an appendage of the British Empire. Interventionists and the great host of well-wishers of the Allied cause congratulate their neighbours upon the part they are playing in the conflict, and the remaining isolationists, who in their hearts believe that Lindbergh was right in his declaration that American action should have forced neutrality upon Canada, make it very obvious that they are doing a very generous thing in not offering violent protests against Canada having brought war to North American shores.

It is when it is pointed out to Americans that Canada is not a country of purely Anglo-Saxon stock that their first shock of surprise becomes obvious, so obvious indeed that the Canadian who had not realized it before at once appreciates the real strength of opinion which this nation can throw into the world scales at the present moment. It is that Canada's belligerency is as sure proof of the world-wide stakes in the war as can be found.

Canada, a North American country, Canada, alone in the two Americas, has gone to war. Why? Because of a national conviction shared from coast to coast by men and women of half a hundred racial stocks that the threat offered by Nazi Germany is a matter of concern not to Europe alone but to the Americas and to the world. If we went to war only because we share a common Crown with England, common traditions, common blood, it is doubtful whether our influence upon United States opinion can have much effect. But, if we can prove to the Americans that we are an independent nation, if we can emphasize to them, not the ties that historically bind us to our fellow members in that unique political institution, the British Commonwealth of Nations, but the differences that mark us off, then we present proof which other American countries, unlinked with Great Britain, cannot afford to ignore. If there are twelve million inhabitants of the western hemisphere who have shown their readiness to make every possible sacrifice in this war for reasons which, besides the protection of the general heritage of democracy and freedom, include a hard-headed perception of the inevitable consequences of a Nazi victory upon their fates and fortunes, their influence need not be inconsiderable in a

field of opinion, the favourable development of which is vital to the future of the free world.

From this point of view the contrast between, let us say, New Zealand's homogeneous Anglo-Saxon population and the heterogeneous population of Canada becomes a great asset. Americans may consider it natural that the English-speaking peoples of the Antipodes should make common cause with England. But they are impressed when they learn that only half Canada's people stems from Anglo-Saxon stock, that about 20 per cent are of continental European origin and that the remainder—the people of French Canada—has a record which, in the persistence of its isolationism, can outdo the beliefs of the inhabitants of the Colorado valleys and the Kansas plains. They at once ask questions about the participation in the war of these apparently divergent elements, and the solidity of national unity in the fight against Hitler becomes the achievement not of a British satrapy but of a North American people fighting its own part in a great cause.

In developing the theme, it therefore becomes as valuable as it is legitimate to point to those episodes in our history in which there have been serious divergencies of view between the slowly growing Canada and the dominant Great Britain, the manner in which they were settled, the difficulties that there were in reconciling differences of opinion. From these there flows naturally discussion of the constitutional development of Canada into nationhood though still retaining the vestigial traces of the colonial period. Even the fact that Canada's formal declaration of war came one week after British belligerency in 1939 assumes importance as a symbol of the entire independence of our course, and the Ogdensburg Agreement for joint defence is found valuable as evidence of the Canadian regard for what might be narrowly viewed as a Canadian interest, distinct from a British one.

Off-hand it may seem paradoxical that, at a moment in our history when the aims and purposes of Canada and Great Britain have been more completely unified than ever before, it should become so important to emphasize the many differences that exist between us. But a moment's thought should clear away any such confusing fog. If we believe—as we do believe—that the issues in this war are world-wide, we must prove it to those who have not yet come to that belief. Only thus can we count with certainty upon rallying to our side the rest of the free world.

When the war broke out it was a commonplace of American public discussion to refer to it as a conflict between rival imperialisms. That belief is not yet dead, as witness the persistent efforts of America First to convince the American people that aid to Britain is merely pulling British chestnuts out of the fire. Therefore it becomes important to set Britain in her proper perspective in a world war: as an essential partner in the cause of freedom which is as dear to Canadians and Americans as to the British themselves, and so placed through the accident of geography in the position of supreme danger that the efforts of free peoples everywhere, in their own interests, are needed to see her through.

While this is the approach that Canadians can most usefully make towards their neighbours, it is apparent that its effectiveness can be greatly limited if the Canadian war effort is not always proportionately greater than the present, rapidly growing American defence plan. If it falls behind, hostile critics in the United States will be quick to point out that this North American country of ours, allied closely to Great Britain, is doing less than their own country which is still, nominally at least, at peace. Fortunately the facts in this regard are so strikingly in our favour that Canadians who know them have no difficulty in making effective answer. But they are not assisted towards that end by the emergence in Canada of a malignant school of thought which has done all that it can to minimize to the Canadian public the magnitude and scope of the Canadian effort. Were these criticisms available only to the domestic public they would do little harm. Canadians know how to appraise them at their proper value. But there is no chapter of the America First Committee that does not rejoice at any statement by any Canadian that this country and its government are not putting their backs into the war. The game that is being played follows always the same pattern. Some Canadian announces that Canada is not pulling its weight. This is meat and drink to the Wheelers, Lindberghs, Woods, Norrises, and Flynns, who from their various platforms announce that they have it on unquestionable authority that Canada is slacking. Why, in such circumstances, they ask, should the United States do anything at all? These statements are then picked up in turn by the Canadian critics who, from their platforms, announce that American leaders of opinion believe Canada's heart is not in the war. The game is endless and the only persons to profit from it are the America First Inc.,

which gets gratis and for nothing ammunition it can get from no other source.

Criticism of our war policies there must and should be, but those who criticize should indulge in it without forgetting the responsibilities they carry, as "interpreters" of the effort of free nations at war, to persuade their fellows in the world that only by common action, fully shared by all, can the threat and horror of a Nazi-dominated world be avoided.

THE ARGUMENT OF MILTON'S *COMUS*

A. S. P. Woodhouse

NO complete study of *Comus* exists. Such a study would necessitate four separate steps. The first is an examination of *Comus* in the light of the essential tradition of the masque, the inherited pattern which Milton adopts (having indeed no choice in this instance) and of course adapts to his purposes. The second is an effort to determine more precisely the content of the poem, what it is that Milton is saying or, as I have called it, the argument of *Comus*. The processes of criticism are, or ought to be, self-conscious: it is their only safeguard. So one would avoid the pitfall of attempting an impossible separation of form and content, and merely centre attention first on the one and then on the other, with the object of ultimately bringing them together and restoring a sense of the poem's unity and individuality. The third step is in that direction; for it is an effort to discover the relation for Milton, and in this poem, of experience, thought, and art. The fourth step views the poem once more as an independent unit and applies to its interpretation whatever has been discovered in the first three stages of the examination. If anyone wishes to contend that only the fourth step is literary criticism, and the first three at best preparations for literary criticism, I shall not think the point worth arguing—or the preliminary steps less than necessary. In the present essay I can deal with only one of the questions raised: what it is that Milton is saying, or the argument of *Comus*.[1]

I

I will not pause to establish on theoretic grounds what is so abundantly evident in experience, that intellectual content, wherever it contributes to imaginative and emotional content, becomes

[1] I have only one substantial debt to record. It is to Professor J. H. Hanford's "The Youth of Milton" (*Studies in Shakespeare, Milton and Donne*, University of Michigan Publications, Language and Literature, I, 87-163, especially 139-43, 152). Since I shall have occasion to disagree with him at some points, I wish to express here not only my deep sense of obligation, but also my conviction that his is in general the wisest and most penetrating essay on Milton ever written. In dealing with Spenser I have been helped by the *Variorum Spenser* and by Mr C. S. Lewis's brilliant *Allegory of Love* (1936). My friend Professor Douglas Bush has made some very valuable criticisms and suggestions.

an indispensable factor in the total aesthetic effect of the poem. But I must pause to state the conditions which attach to intellectual content when it becomes a subject of investigation. As a vehicle of ideas poetry labours under a disability, but also enjoys a unique advantage. No poem perhaps—certainly not one whose form is as limiting as the masque—can hope to present ideas with complete precision or to make all their implications specific. On the other hand, poetry has powers of suggestion denied to prose and can convey more than is fully stated or proved. The student of thought in poetry will take due cognizance of both these facts: he will seek to draw forth the argument, to render its implications more precise and specific than he finds them, and in so doing he will be guided by the suggestions which the poet has been able to give, here by an image, there by an overtone.

Willing response, however, to the poet's suggestion is not by itself enough. Everybody is familiar with the common criterion for judging the adequacy of a work of popular art: that it should be self-sufficient, should contain within itself whatever is necessary for comprehending it. On the level of ideas, however, this test cannot be very strictly applied. Often one must look outside the poem for what may be called the intellectual frame of reference, common to the poet and his contemporary readers, but lost to a later age: the thing taken for granted in the thought content as the instinctively apprehended capacities and limits of the particular *genre* are taken for granted in the aesthetic effect. The intellectual frame of reference may not be set forth in the poem; but indications of it will be present, and its correct formulation will be a key to unlock the poem's meaning, while its ability to do this will, in turn, test the correctness of the formulation.

There is nothing esoteric about the intellectual frame of reference for *Comus*. It will serve for innumerable works of literature in the seventeenth and earlier centuries and is, indeed, indispensable for understanding their thought—the thought of Spenser, for example, not less than the thought of Milton. Within this frame of reference there is room for every degree of difference in attitude and emphasis: it is a frame of reference, not a body of doctrine, and is tacitly assumed not by the religious only, but by the secular and even the anti-religious writer, who may deny the reality of what I shall describe as "the order of grace" but rarely has the hardihood to ignore it as a concept. The frame of reference may be formulated

with sufficient precision in this way. There are in the life of man, and in the vast array of circumstances which form the setting of the human drama, two levels or, better perhaps, two orders of existence, the natural and the religious, or what we may call the order of nature and the order of grace. To the religious mind, of course, each is dependent on the power and providence of God, but in a manner sufficiently different to warrant the restriction of the term *religious* (which means Christian) to one order only. To the order of nature belongs not only the whole physical world, but also man himself considered simply as a denizen of that world. The rule of its government is expressed not only in the physical laws of nature, but in natural ethics (in what is significantly called the Law of Nature), and even in natural, as opposed to revealed, religion. This order is apprehended in experience and interpreted by reason; and it has its own wisdom, for upon the simple law of nature, by experience and reason, is erected the ethical system of a Plato, an Aristotle, or a Cicero. It has its own institutions, of which the highest is the state; but this is an aspect of the order of nature which need not detain us here. . . . To the order of grace belongs man in his character of supernatural being, with all that concerns his salvation and the two dispensations, the old and the new. The rule of its government is the revealed Law of God, received and interpreted by faith, which includes a special kind of experience, called religious experience. It also has its appropriate institution, the Church, which, like the state, does not concern us here. . . . Now on the precise relation subsisting between the order of nature and the order of grace a great variety of opinion is possible and, especially in the seventeenth century, is met. There are those who insist on the sharp contrast and wide divergence of the two orders; and this class includes individuals and sects of opposite principles. The ascetic and the rigorist (for in this they agree, though not in the action that it entails) insist on the divergence, to depress nature and exalt grace; the naturalist, to exalt nature and depress grace, finding the demands of the higher order "unnatural" and denying their validity. There are those who insist on the clear-cut separation of the two orders with the intention of accepting them both (though perhaps with different degrees of conviction) while avoiding all inference from the one to the other. Such is the fideist, who takes the order of grace on authority, but in the order of nature pursues his experimental and sceptical way;

the Baconian scientist, with his two philosophies, natural and divine; the Puritan extremist, reactionary in the realm of grace, progressivist in the realm of nature. All of these—though for different ends—apply what I have elsewhere called the *principle of segregation*.[2] Opposed to them is the large class of thinkers who (with many differing shades of emphasis and inference) agree in responding to the profound human instinct for a unified view of life, and who refuse to divorce the two orders. They insist that the order of grace is the superstructure whose foundations are securely laid in nature; that there is no interval between the two orders, which merge in an area common to both; that grace comes to perfect nature (an idea including discipline), not to destroy it; that man's well-being must be defined in terms of the two orders simultaneously,[3] and that what is for his good as a natural being cannot be for his harm as a supernatural, or *vice versa*. This is the position of the Christian humanist, whose special relevance to *Comus* will in due course appear. What we are concerned with now is simply the intellectual frame of reference afforded by the conception of the two orders of nature and grace; for to one of the two, or to an area common to them both, every idea and every value must pertain. Only in reference to this framework can the argument of *Comus* be fully understood.

The common assumption, correct so far as it goes, is that the argument of *Comus* has for its theme chastity. But more careful examination reveals that coupled with the doctrine of chastity (not identified with it as a careless reader might suppose, but coupled with it) are two others: a doctrine of temperance and continence (the "holy dictates of spare Temperance") and a doctrine of virginity ("the sage And serious doctrine of Virginity"). When these facts are brought into relation with the intellectual frame of reference, we observe that temperance and continence are virtues on the natural level; that chastity, the central virtue of the poem, moves in an area common to nature and grace; and that the doctrine of virginity belongs exclusively to the order of grace, which in the poem it is used to illustrate and even symbolize.

[2] *Puritanism and Liberty* (1938), introd. 39-40, 58-9, 84-5.

[3] Cf. Milton's assertion, in his seventh Prolusion, that "nothing can be recounted justly among the causes of our happiness unless in some way it takes into consideration both that eternal and this temporal life"; and his twofold definition of the end of education (*Prose Works*, Bohn ed., III, 464, 467).

Or, if one may resort to a simple visual formulation, what we have is this:

(1) The *doctrine of temperance*, which, in the circumstances presented in the poem, is necessarily:	Nature
(2) A *doctrine of continence*, which, to render it secure, and to translate it from a negative to a positive conception, requires to be completed by:	Nature
(3) The *doctrine of chastity*, which is thus grounded in nature. This is, moreover, elaborated, still on the level of nature, in terms of the Platonic philosophy, to the point where it can be taken over by Christianity, which sanctions the natural virtues and, by the addition of grace, carries them on to a new plane. Of this new plane	Nature and Grace
(4) The *doctrine of virginity* becomes in the poem the illustration and symbol (but not the complete synonym).	Grace

We are concerned here with the argument of *Comus*, and not with the relation of that argument to Milton's personal experience. But it happens, most fortunately, that we are able to test our formulation of the intellectual frame of reference as it is applied in *Comus*, by comparing it with the celebrated account in retrospect which Milton gave of his experiences during the period when the poem was written. This account, in the *Apology for Smectymnuus*, was offered in rebuttal of the charge of youthful incontinence made by his adversaries, but it attaches itself to Milton's conception of the ideal poet which he sought to become, one whose life was itself a true poem. Here we find him commencing on the natural level, passing (not without aid from Plato) to the verge of the religious level, and finally moving securely thereon: we find the doctrine of continence bringing the doctrine of chastity, and at last the doctrine of virginity, in its wake, as the poet ascends from the order of nature, through an area where the two orders meet, to the order of grace. As in *Comus*, we may describe the doctrine of chastity as the central theme; and, even if we discard the reservation in the *Apology* in favour of the married state as belonging to a time after the poem was written, we shall still recognize that the doctrine of virginity is not regarded as the whole of Christian teaching on the subject of chastity, though it is regarded as a doctrine specifically Christian and hence one that would be eligible as a symbol of the order of grace. Giving due weight to the direction of his "natural disposition," Milton tells us how he was led onward

and upward, first by the writings of the poets, then by the philosophy of Plato, with its "abstracted sublimities" (a phrase we shall have occasion to remember), and to his final goal by Christianity, its plain injunctions and "high mysteries" (another phrase to be remembered)—that Christianity which evidently confirms, while it transcends, the dictates of natural ethics and the highest wisdom of the philosophers. Milton writes in part:

> Thus from the laureat fraternity of the poets, riper years and the ceaseless round of study led me to the shady spaces of philosophy; but chiefly to the divine volumes of Plato and his equal, Xenophon: where if I should tell ye what I learned of chastity and love, I mean that which is truly so, whose charming cup is only virtue, which she bears in her hand to those who are worthy; (the rest are cheated with a thick intoxicating potion, which a certain sorceress, the abuser of love's name, carries about;) and how the first and chiefest office of love begins and ends in the soul, producing those happy twins of her divine generation, knowledge and virtue; with such abstracted sublimities as these, it might be worth your listening. . . .[4]

"Last of all," he continues, "not in time, but as perfection is last, that care was ever had of me not to be negligently trained in the precepts of the Christian religion." And these precepts confirmed and built upon "a certain reservedness of natural disposition, and moral discipline learnt out of the noblest philosophy," which alone would have been sufficient to ensure first a disdain of incontinence, then a love of chastity. But now he was able to receive the doctrine of chastity on the religious level, "unfolding those chaste and high mysteries, . . . that 'the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.' " "Nor did I slumber," he concludes, "over that place expressing such high rewards of ever accompanying the Lamb with those celestial songs to others unapprehensible but not to those who were not defiled with women, which doubtless means fornication; for marriage must not be called a defilement." Continence may be achieved on the basis of natural ethics (and be taught by those good teachers the poets, though not religiously inspired). Chastity, even in its "abstracted sublimities," may be learned from the wise and virtuous pagan philosophers (also poets in their way), who move likewise on the natural level but strain upward to the very verge of the religious. And these teachings Christianity by its precepts confirms. But above the natural level is the religious and there Christian doctrine is the only guide. Such is the scheme of the *Apology*; and, broadly speaking, it is identical with that of *Comus*.

[4] *Prose Works*, III, 119-22.

II

That the doctrine of chastity is the central theme in the argument of the poem is obvious from the emphasis that it receives. The virtues of temperance and continence are treated with brevity, and subordinated to it, while the mysterious merits of the virgin state are but hinted in expounding the doctrine of chastity in its highest reaches. But that doctrine itself is set forth at large by the Elder Brother, and is symbolized by the Lady, who speaks for temperance and continence, it is true, but stands for chastity. We shall do well, however, to consider the virtues in the ascending order in which we have already presented them; and if the space which we give to the lower virtues seems disproportionate, it is because the significance of their presence in the poem has never been observed and because it can be brought out only by detailed exposition and some comparison with a chief moulding influence, Spenser, and with Milton's later thought.

In the temptation scene the attack of Comus is not against chastity in the full meaning of the term, but against continence, which he derides as "the lean and sallow Abstinence." The solicitation that meets the Lady is identical in kind with that which meets Guyon in the Bower of Bliss, an episode immensely impressive to Milton,[5] and the real centre of Spenserian influence on *Comus*, as is quite natural, for Acrasia is Spenser's elaboration of the Circe motif and Comus is Milton's. The special mark of both is the prostitution of natural powers to the purposes of mere sensual pleasure. This is strongly underlined by Spenser and is symbolized by the scenery of the Bower of Bliss, where art counterfeits and even perverts nature and the beauty is as subtly false as that of the contrasted Garden of Adonis is natural and true. In *Comus* there is no such elaboration of this symbol; but the wizard's palace "set out with all manner of deliciousness" is, like the Bower of Bliss, of art, not nature, and (as we shall see) the Garden of Adonis, with its wealth of natural beauty, also finds its place in Milton's poem.

It is in another form, however, that the theme of nature chiefly enters into *Comus*.[6] By an appeal to nature the magician seeks

[5] *Faery Queen*, 2.12. Cf. *Areopagitica* (*Prose Works*, II, 68).

[6] Lines 706-80. Comus' appeal to nature is no invention of Milton's but a Renaissance Ovidian commonplace, found in Spenser's Phaedria, and in Marlowe, Donne, Randolph, and others; see Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance*

to undermine the virtue of continence, and this in two ways. Overtly his argument is that the natural world by the profusion of its gifts invites men to a life of unrestricted enjoyment: for this the abundance of nature was ordained, and to refuse it "in a pet of temperance" is to manifest ingratitude and thwart nature's plan. But there is a second suggestion: the note of nature is abundance, profusion, and *a wasteful fertility*:

> Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
> With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
> Covering the earth with odours, fruits and flocks,
> Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable . . .?

"Nature," said Renan, "knows nothing of chastity." It is the very contention that Comus is seeking to illustrate. And the application to humanity is not left in doubt: one should not be cozened by words, but reflect that

> Beauty is Nature's coin . . .
> and the good thereof
> Consists in mutual and partaken bliss.

(Observe that the magician's argument ends not in the provision of life for its own replenishment, but in mere gratification.) In a double sense, then, temperance (which here means continence) is, he suggests, unnatural. This specious argument, says the Lady, is untrue, it is "false rules pranked in reason's garb":

> Imposter! do not charge most innocent nature
> As if she would her children should be riotous
> With her abundance; she, good cateress,
> Means her provision only for the good,
> *That live according to her sober laws,*
> *And holy dictates of spare Temperance.*

And she continues with the famous attack on "lewdly-pampered Luxury" as opposed to nature's plan.

Now it is interesting and significant to observe that the Lady does not contradict the picture of nature given by Comus: she merely points out its incompleteness and repudiates his inference. Nature is marked not by abundance only, but by order and rationality. To live according to nature in the true sense is not to live riotously, prostituting her gifts to sensual gratification, but temperately and in conformity with her rational character and ends. This is plainly Stoic doctrine, and it is not for nothing that

Tradition in English Poetry (1932), 135, 267, and *Paradise Regained* etc., ed. M. Y. Hughes (1937), xliii-iv.

Comus is made to warn the Lady in advance against "those budge doctors of the Stoic fur." In the years after *Comus*, Milton was to elaborate his doctrines of nature ("most innocent nature"), of reason and of temperance. In so doing he altered much, substituting a monistic for a dualistic philosophy and reacting, temporarily at least, against every suggestion of asceticism. I am very far from denying—indeed I insist upon—the wide interval between *Comus* and Milton's later thought. Only one must not exaggerate the differences or fail to recognize similarities where they exist. And for all the change in his metaphysic of nature, and in the tone of his ethic, the twofold aspect of nature remains, and constitutes the groundwork of his no longer ascetic (though still rigoristic) doctrine of temperance; and the role of reason (which is only hinted in *Comus*) is not reversed, but confirmed and emphasized. The nature described by Comus and the Lady is the nature whose production is to be recounted by Milton in the seventh book of *Paradise Lost*. There creation is a twofold process, corresponding to the two complementary aspects of nature. For nature is a living whole, a vital scale, embracing life in all its profusion, and the process of creation in this aspect approximates very closely to gestation and birth. But before nature is a living, it is an ordered whole, a rationally graduated scale. And here creation does not approximate to birth; it is the imposition of form and order on chaos, the endowment of nature with a rational principle, as the other is her endowment with a vital principle. Thus Milton later elaborates the view of nature already implicit in *Comus*. And similarly he elaborates the doctrine of temperance. It means a proper use of the gifts of nature, a proper choice made by reason among them; for "reason is but choosing." It is nature the vital, the abounding, that furnishes the materials of the choice, and nature the ordered, the rational, that furnishes the principle of choice. For not only is reason the prerogative (indeed Milton calls it the essence) of the soul, but it is also imprinted upon the world: as Whichcote said, there is the reason of the mind, and the reason of the thing. Thus Milton elaborates his view of nature, of reason and of temperance. There are important changes, of course: a new metaphysic of nature (but it is, in one sense, just an elaboration of the idea implicit in the phrase about "most innocent nature"), a new emphasis on the role of

reason (which is hardly explicit[7] in the original formulation), and a more liberal specific content for the term *temperance*, no longer qualified by the epithet "spare." But it is an elaboration (and modification), not a simple reversal: some at least of the primary intuitions on which it is grounded are already present in *Comus*.

As in Spenser, temperance (we have shown) is treated primarily as a virtue on the natural level, not on the religious. Of course Milton cannot afford Spenser's wealth of detail, and indeed there is little evidence of direct Spenserian influence on Milton's theory; no hint, for example, of Spenser's exposition of the virtue in terms of the Aristotelian mean, which was perhaps always foreign to Milton's mind, or in terms of the Platonic control of the rational over the irrational (whether the irascible or the appetitive), which should have been more congenial to him. But there are important similarities to Spenser in emphasis and tone, not all of which we have yet mentioned. Though treated on the natural level, Spenser's reading of the virtue of temperance in Book 2 of the *Faery Queen* impresses us as distinctly rigoristic, culminating, as it does, in the destruction of the Bower of Bliss. This is partly accounted for by the fact that, with increasing definiteness as the book proceeds, Spenser couples with temperance the Aristotelian continence: the story of Guyon is the legend of temperance *and continence*. And in *Comus* a like impression springs from a similar coupling of virtues—Spenserian virtues, though not directly Aristotelian. But these virtues are not sufficient in Spenser's experience: they must be rendered secure and translated from negative to positive terms by the addition of chastity, which means not mere abstention from evil but an active pursuit of the good. To the virtue of chastity the next book of the *Faery Queen* is devoted. And so is the next stage in the argument of *Comus*.

Having spoken for temperance, inevitably interpreted in the circumstances as continence, the Lady proceeds:

> Shall I go on?
> Or have I said enow? To him that dares
> Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
> Against the sun-clad power of Chastity,
> Fain would I something say; —yet to what end?

[7]That it is implicit is confirmed not only by such allusions to reason as that in line 529, but by the fact that (as Professor Bush remarks) Milton evidently follows Sandys' interpretation of the Circe myth.

> Thou hast nor ear, nor soul, to apprehend
> The sublime notion and high mystery
> That must be uttered to unfold the sage
> And serious doctrine of Virginity.[8]

Here we are brought face to face with a difficulty. It is not that the Lady fails to expound the doctrine of chastity; for that has already been done by the Elder Brother, whose exposition the reader is invited to recall—an invitation of which we shall avail ourselves. The difficulty is that here, and in the speech of the Elder Brother, there is no such clear-cut distinction between the doctrine of chastity and that of virginity as there is between the doctrine of chastity and that of temperance and continence. The two seem to merge; so that Mr Tillyard can ask whether in *Comus* Milton is primarily concerned with premarital chastity or rather with the special virtue attached to the state of virginity considered in itself, and can declare, with M. Saurat, for the second alternative. But the intellectual frame of reference, supported as it is by the autobiographical passage in the *Apology*, enables us to answer the question: Milton is concerned with both as interdependent parts in a system that includes nature and grace; but the central theme is the doctrine of chastity, which is illustrated on the purely religious level by the Christian doctrine of virginity. And that this is the correct answer is proved by the fact that it clears the sense of the whole poem. There is a second, but less formidable difficulty connected with the transition from the order of nature to the order of grace. It is the fact that in *Comus*, in contrast with (for example) the *Nativity Ode*, Milton is reticent in the introduction of specifically religious terminology. A moment's reflection shows that this is attributable to the *genre* and occasion of the poem; but, confessedly, it slightly obscures the scheme of the argument, and forces us to read between the lines.

That argument as it deals with chastity moves in the area common to nature and grace. The speeches of the Elder Brother,[9] though not highly dramatic, develop naturally enough as part of a dialogue on the fate of the lost Lady. But the points made, and the order in which they are made, have a special interest.

(1) First the poet emphasizes the power and security of virtue in general, and in itself, without particular reference either to chastity

[8]Lines 779-87 (not in Bridgewater MS).

[9]Lines 359-475, 584-99.

or to anything above the natural level. "The mind is its own place," as Milton already knows. And virtue arms the mind, first with inward peace ("the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever"), and then with inward illumination

> (He that has light within his own clear breast
> May sit i' the centre and enjoy bright day).

We are to remember this when we hear the Lady's defiance of Comus: "Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind"; and once more (as we shall see) before the poem closes.

(2) Then he suggests that chastity is in very special degree a strength and protection to the person that possesses it: a strength and protection referable (like all good gifts) to Heaven, but still the mind's own

> (a hidden strength,
> Which if Heaven gave it, may be termed her own).

We are still on the natural level,[10] but the idea of virtue's—and specifically of chastity's—ultimate (though perhaps unrecognized) dependence on God's gift is suggested. This is a point of juncture between the two orders, which permits grace to build upon nature in a way to be described in points 4 and 5; but first,

(3) the grounding of chastity, and its power, in the order of nature is emphasized by a deliberate reference to non-Christian wisdom:

> Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
> Antiquity from the old schools of Greece,
> To testify the arms of chastity?
> Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
> Fair silver-shafted queen for ever chaste. . . .
> What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield
> That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin, . . .
> But rigid looks of chaste austerity
> And noble grace that dashed brute violence . . .?

(4) And only now do we come to the passage to which the Lady's speech to Comus is designed to send us back:

> So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity,
> That when a soul is found sincerely so,

[10]Professor Bush remarks that in their Miltonic meaning Wisdom and Contemplation (lines 375, 377) suggest something above natural reason. I agree that in another context they would do so. I do not think that they have here a specifically religious content, but that they will take on a religious meaning only when submitted to, and reviewed in the light of, grace. The same thing applies to the image of lines 375-80, which (as he points out) seems to be an allusion to the ascent of the soul in the *Phaedrus* of Plato.

> A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
> Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
> And in clear dream and solemn vision
> Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;
> Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
> Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
> The unpolluted temple of the mind,
> And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
> Till all become immortal.

Here one recognizes Platonic doctrine, the doctrine taught by Spenser:

> For of the soule the bodie forme doth take,
> For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make;

the doctrine, also, accepted by Milton, of "chastity and love . . .: how the first and chiefest office of love begins and ends in the soul, producing those happy twins of her divine generation, knowledge and virtue." For to peace and freedom and illumination of mind on the level already stated, is here added illumination of a higher order, whose note is not self-sufficiency, but self-surrender, and whose communication is rapture. And as in the passage from the *Apology*, the "abstracted sublimities" (what the Lady calls "the sublime notion") of Platonism lead on directly to "those chaste and high mysteries" (the Lady's phrase is identical, "the high mystery") of Christian teaching; for to Milton, at this stage of his development, Platonism marks the highest reach of thought on the natural level and its point of juncture with the divine. But here in contrast to the *Apology*, Platonic and Christian doctrine merge, though it may well be (as we shall observe) that there is ascent within the order of grace and that more is meant by the Lady's allusion to the "high mystery" than is contained in the Elder Brother's exposition.

(5) Finally, the recurring idea of chastity's self-protective power receives, on the religious level, its confirmation and its explanation, in the doctrine of Eternal Providence. It is for the Christian pre-eminently that "all things work together for good." The ideas here uttered are repeated in a larger context in *Paradise Lost* and are a ground of the optimism which is one of its notes. Not malice, and not

> that power
> Which erring men call Chance,

but the power and providence of God reign supreme. On this the Christian stakes everything; for

> if this fail,
> The pillared firmament is rottenness,
> And earth's base built on stubble.

The emphasis on Providence is reinforced by the presence of the Attendant Spirit, who is its minister and almost its symbol.

We have said that, like Spenser, Milton realizes the necessity of ascending from a doctrine of temperance and continence to a doctrine of chastity. Professor Hanford goes much further, emphasizing the extent to which "Milton has been influenced by his master's romantic allegory of chastity in the third book of the *Faerie Queene*,"[11] and finding in that book, not in book 2 (as we have done), the main contact of *Comus* with Spenser. What impresses us in the doctrine of chastity is not the similarity of *Comus* to the *Faery Queen*, but its significant dissimilarity. In book 3 Spenser's main emphasis is so different from Milton's in *Comus* that the two poets might almost seem to be writing on different subjects; for Milton's doctrine of chastity culminates in—though even on the religious level it is not co-extensive with—a doctrine of virginity, whereas Spenser's doctrine of chastity is elaborated in connection with an ideal of wedded love. Spenser's legend of chastity is also his legend of love; not the intellectual love of Platonism, as set forth by Milton in the *Apology*, and in *Comus* merged with Christian doctrine, and assuredly not the "high mystery" of Christian heavenly love, also set forth in the *Apology*, and presented in *Comus* as the highest reach of Christian thought, but love as it manifests itself in human marriage. Spenser's knight of chastity, the warrior maiden Britomart, is virginal, but by no means vowed to virginity: on the contrary, she is vowed to the love of one good man, and in her single devotion passes unscathed through every danger, unassailed by any temptation. The security with which Spenser's idealism is here rooted in the realities of ordinary human nature is evidenced by a wealth of psychological insight, nowhere more impressive than in Britomart's dream in the temple of Isis. I am far from denying the influence of Christianity on Spenser's treatment of chastity: what he presents is in one aspect a Christian ideal of marriage (the history of the subject is far too complicated to talk about *the* Christian ideal of marriage), but it is an ideal of marriage, or of chastity culminating in marriage, and it is idle to try to approximate it to an ideal of chastity cul-

[11] *Op. cit.*, 140-1.

minating in virginity.[12] In *Comus* chastity is never, even by implication, viewed in connection with the wedded love which Milton was later to hail. It is here that *Comus* stands at its greatest distance from *Paradise Lost*, and at a distance almost as great from book 3 of the *Faery Queen*.[13]

It will not have escaped the reader, that in drawing out the argument of *Comus* I have been contending against the common view that it is simple, unrelievedly austere, and negative in conception. There can be no doubt, however, that its doctrine of chastity culminates in what Milton calls the sage and serious doctrine of virginity. This allusion is to be partly understood in relation to the mingled Platonic and Christian teaching of the Elder Brother's speech, but also as carrying a specifically Christian content, as symbolizing chastity, indeed, not merely in the order of grace, but there in its utmost reach. It may be granted that this last fact is not directly stated and that one can deduce it only by a consideration of the poem as a whole, and by cross-reference to other passages (in the *Apology* and at the conclusion of *Lycidas* and the *Epitaphium Damonis*) alluding to the Christian doctrine of heavenly love as set forth in Revelation 14. 4, which Milton

[12]I would not be thought to reduce *F.Q.* 3. to a sermon in dull domestic virtue. Spenser, the Platonist, views chastity and love as incentives to high idealism and heroic action. But in Britomart these incentives are expressed in relation to marriage, and not to any cult of virginity: that is the only point with which I am concerned.

[13]Nor have the minor characters in which Spenser deals with other aspects of chastity more relation than Britomart to Milton's masque, with one possible exception, Belphoebe, Spenser's version of the classical Diana. To Britomart Professor Hanford would trace "the martial conception [that] underlies such passages as *Comus* 440 ff." (*op. cit.*, 141). But the conception, though militant, is not martial; and to me the lines with their allusions to Diana and Minerva recall the spirit of Spenser's portrait not of Britomart, but of Belphoebe. More plausible is Professor Hanford's contention that the Lady's rescue which can be completed only by the reversal of the enchanter's charm, owes something to the rescue of Amoret (*F.Q.* 3. 12. 36), though there is a possible common source in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 14. 301-2 (Hughes). But least plausible of all is the assumption that Milton's emphasis on providential intervention to guard chastity requires a source and finds it in the rescue of Florimel by Proteus (*F.Q.* 3. 8. 29 ff.). And anyway these would be mere surface borrowings: the characters and situations of Amoret and Florimel have nothing in common with the Lady's. In one instance Professor Hanford exaggerates Milton's divergence from Spenser: it is the one certain and significant borrowing from book 3, the allusion to the Garden of Adonis (see below, p. 65).

evidently reads as the transcendent Christian version of Plato's doctrine of "chastity and love." That Milton, at the time of the writing of *Comus*, set a marked value on the Christian conception of virginity seems certain: so marked a value that he was willing to regard it as the highest culmination of chastity and to use it as the symbol of chastity in the order of grace—as the highest culmination and the symbol, but, as the *Apology* (even if we omit the reservation in favour of marriage) makes clear, not as co-extensive with the Christian teaching on chastity. Whether or not Milton's doctrine of virginity appears unrelievedly austere, and negative in conception, will presumably depend on the reader's beliefs. But the impression will certainly be modified when it is viewed in its proper context, that is to say, as the ideal culmination of an ethical scheme whose foundations are laid in the order of nature, and which ascends through the whole range of human experience.

Such an effort of comprehension is just as important as what is said on any particular level. And that the effort of comprehension is real and fundamental is put beyond all doubt by the Epilogue. But before turning to it we must briefly notice some further effects of the effort of comprehension.

III

It is not contended—and I think it quite impossible to contend—that the effort of comprehension is completely successful, that Milton avoids all occasion of conflict between nature and grace. I mean, of course, *unnecessary* occasion of conflict; for wherever one has an ascending scale of values, whether it extends to the religious level or pauses on the humanistic, there will be subordination of the lower to the higher: there will be necessary renunciation within a scheme whose note is not renunciation, but *comprehension and ascent*. It is sufficient to recognize that in *Comus* the effort after such a scheme is being made.

Despite the seeming austerity of its doctrine, *Comus* is a very different poem from *Paradise Regained*, the later work with which it presents the most obvious points for comparison. In *Paradise Regained* Milton comes nearer than anywhere else in his writings to asserting an absolute division between the goods of the order of nature and those of the order of grace, comes nearer to applying what I have called the principle of segregation. One must, of course, be on one's guard against too easily supposing that what

Christ rejects, he necessarily rejects as in itself evil, and not as evil merely by occasion because unfitting to present circumstances and because offered by Satan with evil intent. But as one observes the careful exclusion from the things offered of all the gross outward signs of evil so evident in the temptation of Comus, and scans the terms in which Christ's rejection is made, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Milton has come to regard with deep suspicion beauty (to which he has been so constantly devoted), knowledge (with which he has so laboured to enrich himself for God's service), and—though here no comparison with *Comus* is possible—the exercise of power even for good ends. In conformity with his new attitude we find that *Paradise Regained*, as compared with *Paradise Lost*, and also with *Comus*, is relatively bare of Milton's rich additions of poetic beauty and quite bare of philosophic thought; and that this does not depend wholly on the subject is indicated by a like quality in *Samson Agonistes*. Milton's repudiation of wisdom on the natural level, of ancient Greece and its philosophers, who have formed his mind, is notorious and inescapable:

> he who receives
> Light from above, from the fountain of light,
> No other doctrine needs, though granted true;
> *But these are false or little else but dreams,*
> *Conjectures, fancies, built on nothing firm.*[14]

In *Comus*, on the contrary, beauty and the appreciation of beauty are everywhere: even the wizard claims kindred with the Attendant Spirit and the other good characters in his response to it. And for wisdom on the natural level, for philosophy ("How charming is divine philosophy!"), Aristotle (through the medium of Spenser) and the Stoics together give the rule for temperance and continence, and the doctrine of Plato inculcates chastity and points on to, almost merges in, the teaching of Christianity. And Christianity, far from repudiating the findings of natural wisdom, confirms before it transcends them. There is no conscious divorce between nature and grace, and no interval between the two orders. So much our exposition of the argument of *Comus* has been designed to make clear. But the question of beauty, both for its intrinsic importance and because it is so intimately bound up with the meaning of the Epilogue, demands a word or two more.

The beauty of *Comus* is natural beauty in the sense of belonging

[14] *Paradise Regained* 4. 288-92.

to the order of nature, but aesthetically speaking it cannot be described as simple natural beauty. It has a certain Arcadian quality which readily merges with the pastoral and, beyond that, with a more generalized idyllic note, and this in turn permits the inclusion of an element of myth, classical and native. These facts belong rather to a consideration of *Comus*, the masque; but they must be taken into account if one is to gauge aright the extent of beauty on the natural level to which response is indicated. It has been made matter of wonder that Comus shares with the Attendant Spirit (and we may add, though in lesser degree, the Brothers and the Lady) an immediate response to this beauty.[15] But there is no mystery here. The response of the good characters means that for Milton beauty is to the good a good, and one to be received with joy. Like other goods on the natural level it depends on good use, and is susceptible of perversion. Almost it seems that beauty, like nature, "means her provision only for the good." We have seen how, when beauty is perverted to evil ends, Spenser presents it as art imitating and falsifying nature, and we have caught one hint of this in Milton also. But in general Milton is quite ready to admit that the beauty which is to the good a good is the same beauty which the evil pervert to evil ends. This indeed is characteristic of his whole attitude to the natural order. So with daring, and a subtlety quite wasted on his modern critics, he shows us Comus responding to beauty in words that might be mistaken for those of the Attendant Spirit, but perverting it to evil—to what Milton takes to be evil—in the very act of response. To quote the lines in question[16] is to prove the point, but lest it should still be missed we will call italics to our aid:

> The star that bids the shepherd fold
> Now the top of heaven doth hold;
> And the gilded car of day
> His glowing axle doth allay
> In the steep Atlantic stream. . . .[17]
> Meanwhile, welcome joy and feast,
> *Midnight shout and revelry,*
> *Tipsy dance and jollity.*

[15]Enid Welsford, *The Court Masque* (1923), 321.

[16]Lines 93-144.

[17]Originally, it would seem, this allusion was intended to recall the opening speech of the Attendant Spirit, where there was a reference to "the wide Atlantique" (cancelled passage, preserved in Cambridge MS).

Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.
Rigour now is gone to bed. . . .
We that are of purer fire
Imitate the starry quire,[18]
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift rounds the months and years.
The sounds and seas with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert faeries and the dapper elves.
By dimpled brook and fountain-brim
The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:
What has night to do with sleep?
Night has better sweets to prove:
Venus now wakes and wakens Love.[19]
Come, let us our rites begin;
'Tis only daylight that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veiled Cotytto,[20] *to whom the secret flame*
Of midnight torches burns! mysterious dame,
That ne'er are called but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air!
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair
Wherein thou rid'st with Hecate, and befriend
Us thy vowed priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done. . . .
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.[21]

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[18]This couplet is italicized because, for all its beauty and seeming innocence, it is untrue. The spheres with their "ninefold harmony," audible only to the pure in heart, have for Milton a special significance: they represent the highest degree of perfection in the natural order, the point of contact with the supernatural. See below, p. 71.

[19]The Venus and Cupid here alluded to represent, of course, wanton love; see below p. 67.

[20]The non-classical reader will not appreciate the full extent of licentiousness conveyed by the name, though he will recognize the association with evil implied by Hecate and the blotting out of light. See C. G. Osgood, *The Classical Mythology of Milton's English Poems*, 24-5.

[21]Another seemingly innocent couplet, which instantly reminds us indeed of a genuinely innocent one,

Come and trip it as ye go
On the light fantastic toe,

a type of the "unreproved pleasures free" of L'Allegro (lines 33-4, 40). But, as Osgood makes clear, Comus is still alluding to the obscene rites of Cotytto.

It is the more necessary to be clear about Milton's meaning in this speech because in the aesthetic and in the intellectual pattern it is evidently intended to stand in a relation of contrast with the Epilogue.

IV

The Epilogue is not easy to interpret. On the surface it presents a description of the Attendant Spirit's abode, though even of this some doubt might be entertained were it not for the cancelled lines of the Spirit's opening speech, preserved in the Cambridge MS, with their allusions to the stream Ocean (and also to the Atlantic, a link with the speech of Comus quoted above), to the Hesperian garden and to hyacinth and roses. But evidently "more is meant than meets the ear," and the method employed is less that of allegory than of symbol. The question is, precisely what is symbolized? "In the Spirit's Epilogue," says Professor Hanford,[22]

> Milton sings of Paradise. The language is highly esoteric . . . and Milton expressly calls attention in the parenthesis, "List mortals, if your ears be true," to the hidden spiritual meaning. The bliss proposed is that of Heavenly love as the ineffable compensation for a life devoted to the ideal of chastity. . . . In adopting Spenser's image of the Garden of Adonis Milton entirely changes its application. . . . The pagan image of the love of a mortal youth for a goddess draws insensibly nearer to the truth in the reversed symbol of the union of the God of love himself with Psyche, the human soul, and if Milton's classic taste prevents him from concluding with an allusion to the Lamb and his eternal bride it is because there is no need.

This interpretation has been very generally accepted, but I do not think that Milton's allusion is to Paradise, or (at least in Professor Hanford's sense) to the rewards and compensations of the chaste soul hereafter. The whole deeper significance of the Epilogue lies in its symbolical character; and I should be disposed to look for some larger symbolism, which might include the reward of the chaste soul hereafter but would not be restricted to it. I believe that nothing less is symbolized in the Epilogue than life itself, as the Christian mind, grounded in nature but illuminated by grace, alone can apprehend it. I do not think that in adopting Spenser's image of Venus and Adonis Milton entirely changes its application, or indeed changes it at all: I believe that he relies upon a brief—perhaps too brief—allusion to recall what Spenser

[22] *Op. cit.*, 152.

had implied. On the relation of Milton's image of Cupid and Psyche to Spenser's, Professor Hanford is silent: I believe that Milton's meaning is very similar to the interpretation commonly given to Spenser's lines, but not to Spenser's true intention. (I realize that my argument would be simpler and perhaps more convincing if I could say that Milton followed Spenser throughout. Unfortunately, I do not find that Spenser's lines will bear the interpretation commonly put upon them, though it is possible that Milton may have given them that interpretation and thus have supposed himself to be following Spenser throughout.) I think that, in the progression which Milton adopts, the specifically and exclusively religious level is not reached even in the allusion to Cupid and Psyche, much less in the allusion to Venus and Adonis, but only in the concluding lines of the Epilogue. And in the light of those lines, of course, the whole is to be read. So I interpret the Epilogue up to this point as symbolizing the transfigured view of life which the practice of virtue and the experience of grace induce. On no other hypothesis can I explain the ascent through the order of nature to the order of grace which the lines evidently embody, beginning on the plane of natural beauty, expressed in and with classic mythology and idyllicism, and culminating at last in Christianity.

The journey commences in the *idea* of whatever is fresh and beautiful in the natural world: ocean, air, and the flowering earth, and the reader lingers

> amidst the gardens fair
> Of Hesperus and his daughters three
> That sing about the golden tree.
> Along the crisped shades and bowers
> Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;
> The Graces and the rosy-bosomed Hours
> Thither all their bounties bring. . . .
> Iris there with humid bow
> Waters the odorous banks that blow . . .
> And drenches with celestial dew
> (List, mortals, if your ears be true)
> Beds of hyacinth and roses,
> Where young Adonis oft reposes,
> Waxing well of his deep wound
> In slumber soft, and on the ground
> Sadly sits the Assyrian queen:
> But far above in spangled sheen
> Celestial Cupid, her famed son advanced,

> Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced,
> After all her labours long,
> Till free consent the gods among
> Make her his eternal bride,
> And from her fair unspotted side,
> Two blissful twins are to be born,
> Youth and Joy. . . .

The joyous acceptance of natural beauty by the good is unmistakably indicated, and the mind of the reader is carried back to Comus, who accepts but perverts to evil in the act of accepting. The first problem arises with the allusion to Venus and Adonis.

On the details of Spenser's allegory of the Garden of Adonis[23] critics have not always agreed. It will be enough here to state very briefly what appears to be its main intention. In classic myth and its elaborations one recognizes three different roles assigned to Venus: she is the goddess of wanton love (as in the speech of Comus already quoted); she is the great mother, a principle of generation in all things; and she is the celestial Venus, the symbol of intellectual or spiritual love. In the passage in question Spenser clearly has in mind the second of these roles, with no suggestion of the third. It is an allegory of form and substance[24] —of material forms, represented by Adonis, the masculine principle, and material substance, represented by Venus, the feminine principle—and it sets forth the processes of decay and replenishment throughout the natural world. Further, there is (as we have remarked) a contrast between the Garden of Adonis and Acrasia's Bower of Bliss, where natural powers are prostituted (as they are by Comus) to purposes of mere pleasure, a contrast pointed in Spenser by the opposing Geniuses who guard the two portals and by the types of beauty found beyond them.[25] This allegory of Spenser's, Milton recalls in his allusion to the Garden of Adonis. It symbolizes life on the natural level: the life processes of "most innocent nature." And its appropriateness, once more, is found in the contrast to all that Comus stands for. There is no need to assume with Professor Hanford that Milton alludes to the third role of Venus, the celestial Venus,[26] or that he translates Spenser's

[23] *Faery Queen* 3. 6.

[24] Brents Stirling in *Variorum Spenser*, III, 347-52.

[25] See C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, 324 ff., 361 ff.

[26] One should record Hughes's note on *Assyrian Queen*, line 1002, that "according to Pausanias 1. 14. 6, 'the Assyrians were the first men to revere the

image to a higher (even the highest) level; for (as we have shown) the natural also has its place in Milton's scheme. This is the world of nature as the chaste and religious are able to apprehend it, and only they. That is the significance of the admonition uttered just before the image of Venus and Adonis is introduced: "List, mortals, *if your ears be true*."

The myth of Cupid and Psyche, which goes back to the charming fairy-story told by Apuleius, had long been allegorized when Spenser added to his picture of the Garden of Adonis his account of how Cupid

> Thither resorts, and laying his sad darts
> Aside, with faire Adonis playes his wanton parts.
>
> And his true love faire Psyche with him playes,
> Faire Psyche to him lately reconcyld
> After long troubles and unmeet upbrayes
> With which his mother Venus her revyld,
> And eke himselfe her cruelly exyld:
> But now in stedfast love and happy state
> She with him lives and hath him borne a chyld,
> Pleasure, that doth both gods and men aggrate,
> Pleasure, the daughter of Cupid and Psyche late.

That Spenser adopted an allegorical meaning already attached to the myth, is the usual assumption:

> The allegorical meaning . . . is clearly developed by Boccaccio and fits Spenser's intention. Boccaccio says, "Psyche is the soul . . . and there is joined with her that which preserves the rational element, that is pure Love," Psyche passes through trials and purgations. "At length . . . she attains to the consummation of divine joy and contemplation, and is joined to her lover forever, and with mortal things sloughed off is born into eternal glory; and from this love is born Pleasure, which is eternal joy and gladness." Pleasure so interpreted is very similar to Plato's *Eudaimonia*. . . .[27]

It seems far from certain that this is the meaning of Spenser's lines when taken in their context. There is no indication that it is the celestial Cupid that is intended. The allegory appears to move on the same level as that of Venus and Adonis, to which

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Celestial Aphrodite'." But surely the phrase *Assyrian Queen* is sufficiently accounted for by the myth of Venus and Adonis itself, which, as Milton well knew (cf. *Nativity Ode* 204) is of Eastern origin. Thammuz was adopted as Adonis. Astoreth or Astarte, the original of the Venus of this myth, was herself identical with the Assyrian goddess Istar. *Assyrian Queen* is thus one of Milton's learned devices of poetical adornment. Cf. Verity's notes on *Comus* 1002, and *P.L.* 1. 438-41.

[27]Lotspeich in *Variorum Spenser*, III, 261.

Spenser attaches it so closely. For him the story of Venus and Adonis represents the spirit of love and the principle of generation operating throughout the natural order; and the story of Cupid and Psyche should somehow represent the same spirit and principle in their specifically human application, which is marriage with its productiveness and legitimate pleasure, opposed once more to the illegitimate pleasures of Acrasia, at war with productiveness.[28] Considering Spenser's free adaptation of myth to the purposes of allegory elsewhere in the *Faery Queen*, it does not seem an insuperable difficulty that this reading of the myth, the only one wholly consonant with text and context, should fall short of other allegorical interpretations current when he wrote.

Be this as it may, Milton's meaning is something quite different from that which I have been bold enough to attribute to Spenser, and resembles the interpretation of the myth given by Boccaccio. Unlike Spenser, Milton indicates clearly that he is not treating the story on the same level as that of Venus and Adonis: on the contrary, this is the *celestial* Cupid, and he is seen *far above* the figures in the Garden. There is no allusion, as in Spenser, to marriage, but to a Platonic doctrine of intellectual or spiritual love, the love "whose charming cup is only virtue," and whose "chiefest office begins and ends in the soul, producing those happy twins of her divine generation, Knowledge and Virtue." And yet there is a difference. For if Milton does not name the offspring of Cupid and Psyche *Voluptas* or Pleasure, like Apuleius and Spenser, neither does he call them simply Knowledge and Virtue, as in his other account of Platonic love, but Youth and Joy. In bestowing on Cupid and Psyche *twin* offspring he means to parallel them with that other pair of the soul's "divine generation," Knowledge and Virtue. These indeed Milton has implied in every line of the poem; so now he can afford to shift the emphasis. Like Knowledge and Virtue the offspring of Cupid and Psyche are not primarily the symbol of a reward to be expected in heaven, but something that the chaste soul rises to here and now. And if this is so, their names are significant indeed. For the conclusion mitigates the austerity, though not the strictness of Milton's doctrine. He repudiates false pleasures, but not joy; wantonness, but not the

[28] It is for marriage that Amoret is educated by Psyche with her own daughter, Pleasure. Actually the education turns out to be insufficient. It has to be completed by Britomart.

spirit of youth. The quest is arduous, he would seem to say, and demands renunciation, but among its rewards may be reckoned not only virtue and knowledge, illumination of mind, peace of mind, but the very things that the adversary would declare to be taken away: life and youth and joy. And to these the final lines of the Epilogue will add one further note: freedom.

First, the beauty of nature, with all its gracious associations, which Comus perverts; secondly, in the image of Venus and Adonis, the powers and processes of nature, which Comus (like Acrasia) would prostitute and thwart; thirdly, in the image of Cupid and Psyche, ascent to the highest virtue and wisdom accessible on the natural level, or rather ascent to an area common to nature and grace: thus far the summary has proceeded. But there is one more step to take:

> Mortals that would follow me,
> Love Virtue: she alone is free;
> She can teach ye how to climb
> Higher than the sphery chime;
> Or if Virtue feeble were,
> Heaven itself would stoop to her.

The terminology is not overtly religious (it seldom is, as we have said, in *Comus*), but here at last we are on the level of grace alone. For the first allusion—and it is literally the first in Milton's writings—is to a doctrine which is to be enormously important in his thinking, the doctrine of Christian liberty.[29] It is to receive much elaboration and many different applications which are without significance here. But it never ceases to be for Milton a cardinal principle of specifically Christian ethics; for his interpretation of this doctrine, as of religion in general, is always (as *Comus* illustrates) predominantly ethical: "Know that to be free is the same as to be pious, to be wise, to be temperate and just, to be frugal and abstinent, and lastly, to be magnanimous and brave. . . ."[30] One recognizes (as no doubt Milton did) the kinship with Stoic doctrine; but for him freedom through virtue, through *voluntary* obedience to the will of God, is the special mark of Christianity: it is *Christian* liberty, which gathers up into the light of revelation the experience of the freedom of mind and will already alluded to in the poem. And the pointing on to a level "higher than the

[29] See my "Milton, Puritanism and Liberty" (UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO QUARTERLY, IV, 1935, 483-513).

[30] *Second Defence* (*Prose Works*, I, 298).

sphery chime" confirms this interpretation of the lines. To hear the music of the spheres indeed is given only to the pure in heart. To ascend above it is to enter the Christian heaven and "hear the unexpressive nuptial song."[31] And the final note of all is unmistakably Christian. We have been told in the body of the poem how Providence intervenes for the protection of virtue. Now this idea, too, is gathered up into the full light of Christian revelation. Here is a note not very often heard in Milton. And it might almost be called the essential note of Christianity; for it speaks to us not of God's power merely, or even of his providence, but of the Divine condescension and mercy to men who would do the will of God but are weak.

In *Comus* Milton does not repudiate the order of nature; he does not deny an area common to nature and grace, or the ascent through it from natural wisdom to divine; he does not seek to divorce the two orders. But he believes that experience on the level of grace will cast a light back upon nature and enable one to realize its true significance.[32] The idea—or rather the experience—is not unique: Cowper expresses it in simple evangelical terms in *The Task*, and Carlyle, in more philosophical terms, in *Sartor Resartus*. To record this experience is the function of the Epilogue, which thus becomes a key to the whole poem, or at least to Milton's intention in the poem. That intention is not, I think, successfully executed at all points: there are notes that jar, especially upon the modern (and uninstructed) ear. But the Epilogue itself is triumphantly successful. And it too casts a light back upon the long road travelled, which it is folly to ignore.

[31]E. M. W. Tillyard (*Milton*, 1934, 376ff.) seems to hold that in *At a Solemn Music* Milton identifies the two, and to wish to read *Comus* in the light of this supposed identification. What the text says is that the two strains *answer* each other. Milton does not divorce the different orders of existence, but neither does he confuse them. There is something *higher than the sphery chime*. It is the unexpressive nuptial song.

[32]There are hints of this earlier in the poem. It is in the light of the religious experience that the dictates of temperance become "holy" and that chastity can be described not as "sun-clad" merely, but as "saintly."

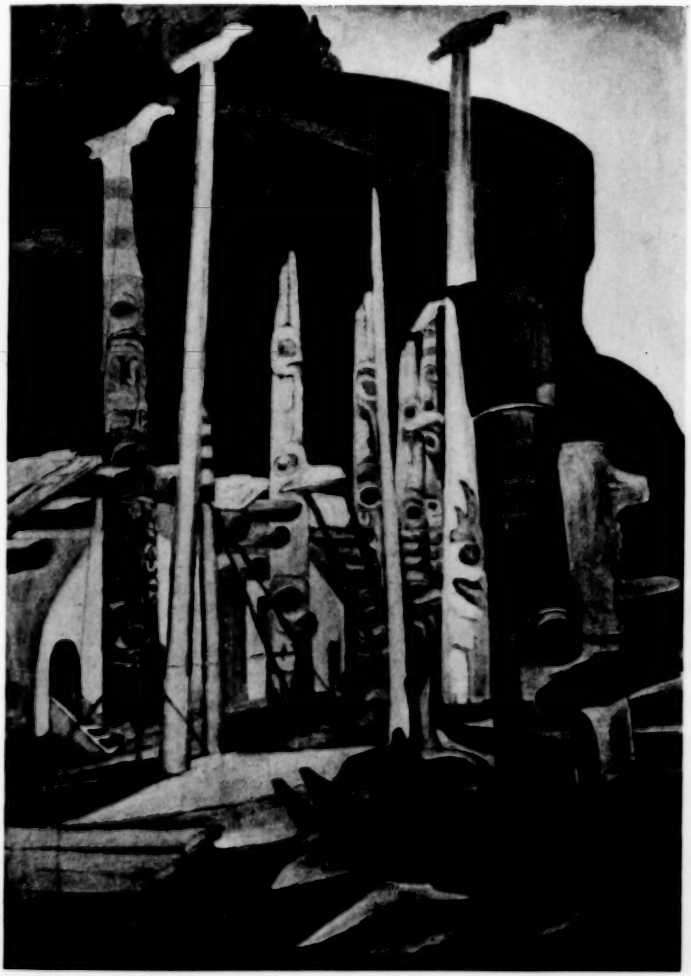
THE GENTLE AND THE AUSTERE
A COMPARISON IN LANDSCAPE PAINTING

DONALD W. BUCHANAN

SINCE I published my biography of James Wilson Morrice, some five years ago, and told of his life in Montreal and Paris, I have been asked by those who still think him essentially Parisian to proceed further, to explain how far his work was Canadian. That is a little difficult. One reason is that ever since Thomas Craven began his apotheosis of the North American in art, there has been a tendency on the part of many people to associate any work of genre that may possess regional flavour, with nationalism in painting. As Morrice was not much inclined towards genre nor given, like the Group of Seven, to the preaching of a northern ideal in landscape, he does not fit readily into these conceptions. He had nevertheless various Canadian qualities, although they were present only in mild implicity, and were not thrust forward nor obvious.

The Group of Seven came after him and A. Y. Jackson was, in a sense, one of his disciples. Yet the urgency of belief found in Jackson and his colleagues would have been alien to Morrice. His approach to painting was a gentle one. At the same time he was undoubtedly the most sensitive artist this country has ever known. We need only look at his picture "Le Bac, Quebec," now in the collection of the National Gallery, to realize that. The subtle sureness of the colours, of the ice and the wintry waters, is remarkable. Unfortunately Morrice did not paint much in Canada. Perhaps his finest works were those last free creations of his brush, the canvases of Trinidad, done towards the end of his life.

He went through many variations in style; he came close to imitation, once or twice, of experiments in the manner of first, Whistler, and much later, Matisse. Yet there was always something in every one of his paintings that was very much his own. French critics have said, for example, that by setting his figures, like solid immovable counters in the landscape, he was able to induce a feeling of gentle melancholy and that his pyschological overtones were not Gallic but vaguely Anglo-Saxon. What seemed most original to them, after this "divinest melancholy" in the sense of Milton's poem, were his rich and oily pigments, and particularly



HEINA, by EMILY CARR

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British Columbia Landscape, by Emily Carr

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the way in which he diffused throughout his colours a soft, sometimes almost imperceptible, pinkish glow that appeared whether the paint was laid on thickly, as in relatively early scenes of the Seine done about 1900 to 1905, or thinly as in his later Canadian or French works.

It is something peculiarly Canadian, that touch of ruddiness in the atmosphere, especially on winter days. European visitors have told me that one of their most vivid impressions of Canada is a memory of a diffused and pinkish light that is nearly always present in our snow-bound skies. One does not see it in the grayer atmospheres of northern or central Europe or in the clearer horizons of the Mediterranean.

If you study the paintings of Morrice you will notice that the rose creeps into his pigments almost from the beginning. He discovered this colouring in some of his first attempts to depict Quebec scenery—that was back in the nineties—and he seemed never to forget it. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that he afterwards painted Parisian skies with a Canadian vision. As a French critic wrote:—"There is much charm in the landscapes of James Wilson Morrice. Among the gray clouds covering his skies, he scatters a rose of exquisite delicacy that he was the first . . . to employ." That was Paris, the year 1911. Yet at about the same time his academic colleagues in Canada were still looking at Quebec and Ontario landscapes with clouded visions, derivatively based on their studies of the Dutch and Barbizon schools. The contrast is amusing; it does not need to be underlined.

The feeling which Morrice had for Canadian landscape, particularly its winter atmosphere, was true. It was perhaps even truer, on occasion, than the vision of many of those who have since avowed their belief in a declared Canadianism. For Morrice, in his Quebec paintings, was not telling you, like a lesson, that this was nationalist landscape and northern air and skies; instead he was simply depicting on canvas, with great sensitivity, his own conception of those snow-covered scenes which he had used to sketch, out-of-doors, on his numerous visits home.

Yet, unlike A. Y. Jackson and Lawren Harris, he did not find the great stimulus to his vision in Canadian nature. Every artist finds such stimulus in his own way, and Morrice, it is safe to assert, found his mainly by travelling. He moved in cosmopolitan realms which led him close to the great experimenters in organic painting,

men like Matisse, who tried to organize pattern and design by modulations, changes, and contrasts in colour, as much as by line and perspective. From the European point of view, Morrice stands forth as a minor figure, a pleasant painter, among the giant contemporaries of modern art. But, considered as a Canadian, he saw the landscapes of his native land as intimately as any had done before him, and despite the accepted power of some who have followed, he remains to date our finest and most sensitive artist.

While he was able to bring a sustained and delicate vision to bear upon his choice of subjects, Morrice never achieved any concentrated awareness of the more austere aspects of Canadian nature. Those artists who have done so since, notably the Group of Seven, have not had, on the other hand, his qualities of continuous sensibility. Lawren Harris, in particular, differs from Morrice. Harris discovered objects, significant fragments, if you will, in our landscape; he emphasized their forms and contours, and so made even the most casual spectator conscious of pine stumps, rock-girt lakes, towering mountains, and clear horizons. In general, the activity of men like Harris, in contrast to the organic approach of Morrice, can be defined as analysis. As far as it went, it was vital activity. Yet at its worst, in the hands of followers, it became mere picture-building. Analysis was thus turned into facile synthesis. Muskoka lakes and Algonquin Park pines began to be pieced together, like coloured mosaic tiles, by a host of imitators, to form flat and obvious patterns.

One of the first painters since the advent of the Group of Seven to absorb the intellectual methods of Harris, and then, having absorbed them, to go forward independently, is Emily Carr of Victoria, B.C. While in her earlier paintings she was concerned with the decorative treatment of Indian villages and totem poles, she has since advanced towards a more expressive handling of landscape. She goes deeply into the moods of that dense tangled greenery which is the forest of the coast of British Columbia. But she is not objective. Her own feelings accompany her into these timbered valleys, over those open hillsides of burnt slash, fire-weed, and rough devil's club.

Miss Carr was brought up in British Columbia. Born in 1871 in Victoria, she still lives there. At one time, however, she travelled widely and studied in the art schools of San Francisco, London, and Paris. Even then, at intervals she kept returning home. Often she journeyed and dwelt alone among the Indian tribes of such

remote areas as the Queen Charlotte Islands and the Cariboo district of the mainland. She went by canoe and pack horse. What painting she produced in this earlier period does not interest us much now. But those experiences provided the background for what came afterwards.

She was well into middle age before she first saw the works of Lawren Harris. The paintings of this semi-abstractionist stirred her. Her early, more commonplace, more amateurish style changed and she soon arrived at a position that was, roughly, on the fringe of the Group of Seven. There followed a period of certain darkish compositions (the more glossy colours then used by some members of the Group never attracted her), with characteristic totem poles and many straight lines and artificially devised contours in the background of forest and sky. As yet no freedom of drawing was noticeable. That was to come later.

Since about 1930 a new growth has been manifest. It would be hard, however, to trace this to influences from outside. What she has found during the past ten years, she has apparently discovered by herself and within herself. Gone are those predilections for coldly abstracted forms. She now has a more organic conception of painting.[1]

A foreboding dread, a fear almost of nature and its power, comes out in such brooding compositions as "Indian Village" with its white church overshadowed, overawed as it were, by great baroque columns of spruce and fir. Those columns are partly decorative, as the formalized rocks and trees of Lawren Harris were decorative, but they pass mere decoration. The whole pattern of her forest becomes so dramatic, so contorted with moody content, that you can, without straining your imagination, readily visualize certain formal resemblances to the dark shadows and the bold reliefs of cathedrals, that is, to the façades of cathedrals that might have been built in the post-renaissance period of Spanish ecclesiastical architecture. It would be a mistake, all the same, to conceive for a moment that any of her paintings are attempts to translate El Greco into the language of Vancouver Island. There is nothing expecially derivative about them. Miss Carr seems to have

[1]Yet by way of comparison, one may note that this new and intense projection of personality, which is to be found in her painting, can be matched as far as similar overtones of emotion go, in the canvases of a contemporary English artist, Frances Hodgkins, a woman of about her own age, but there the resemblance stops. Emily Carr is distinctively Canadian.

discovered for herself the validity of the baroque method of composition as applied to the landscapes of her native province.

We need only read Miss Carr's own writings to find, in addition, what primitive meanings attributed to nature she attempts to call up in her paintings. As literature, her interpretations of Indian legends and her accounts, realistic but weird, of the life and the unspoken dreads of the Indian tribes who inhabit those mountain-shadowed inlets, are brilliant. Contained in a series of essays on West Coast life, which she hopes one day to publish, some of them have already been adapted as narratives, broadcast over the Western network of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Another artist from British Columbia, J. L. Shadbolt, has stated, in his valuable lecture on Emily Carr, that many of her subjects suggest to him "a malignant and sombre nature more worthy of solemn awe or fright than of reciprocative joy," and that "she has, as no other artist among us yet, evoked the presence of the terrible and elemental forces of our landscape." Sentimental observers may not understand what Mr Shadbolt means. They will be shocked by what they call her distortions. But let them look closely into the wilderness of the West Coast and they, too, will find these forces of dread. They do exist. But to be sure, Canadian landscape has other facets also. Rural Ontario has its unexciting and placid atmospheres, while the prairies have great moods of fatalism and unbending clarity that it is perhaps not within the scope of painting to delineate. The Saguenay district and the shores of Lake Superior are a wilderness, but neither the same vegetable density nor the same turbulence of undergrowth lends mystery to their generous and monotonous distances. The West Coast retains its own personality.

As Miss Carr has turned to her own mind for stimulus, so also has she looked inwardly, during much of her life, upon this one unchanging environment. Upon it, she has built her own peculiar blending of description and expressionism in painting. Sometimes the blending, however, has been uncertain. There have been instances when the elements of expressionism have become exaggerated, when under their force her drawing has tended to resolve itself into repetitive twirls. Here and there, and this is not meant as harsh criticism, you may still find a composition that is little more than a giddy convolvulus of hill and bush and sky. But these are merely the exceptions to her talent.

Miss Carr has, in her best work, what her admirer, J. L. Shad-

bolt, calls a "complexity of in-woven construction." He means, I believe, the ability to weave descriptions of natural forms together by means of a remarkably free and sinuous draughtsmanship, and then to add depth to this surface pattern, be it of old totems and towering spruce or of less powerful subjects, by variations in the tone of a restricted range of colours, greens, yellow grays, blues, whites, dark browns, more occasionally reds. In her latest paintings of sunlit patches, the darkness of the forest is lessened. She is now even gay. The intensity of the baroque cathedrals is gone. Some will like the baroque better, some prefer the lighter touch of today. What is certain is that her controlled exuberance of drawing, her use of the strokes and outlines of the brush to create coherence and pattern, and her tendency to design with colour as well as with contour, is now, for the most part, consistent and sure. For this reason she can be classed as an original painter, in the sense of organic construction, along with James Wilson Morrice.

Yet unlike Morrice, who did not worry about Canadian symbols, and who was in later life more interested in assimilating experiments in colour, from those of the impressionists to those of Matisse, than in concerning himself with his native land, Emily Carr has allowed herself to be confronted and disturbed by that urgent analysis of Canadian landscape which the Group of Seven obtained. Morrice had the more gentle, she has had the more austere approach.

Her limitations have been her occasional romanticism, her isolation, and her material struggles. They, too, have been to a degree her advantages. Out of her regionalism she has wrought both a personal and a pictorial integrity. Her canvases and sketches, done with opaque colours on board or paper, may sometimes, it is true, seem intense with a feeling that is beyond comfortable measure. A few of them for that reason do not fit into the living-room as easily as do those less complicated patterns that David Milne draws and colours, or as do those descriptively satisfying scenes of Ontario landscape that Carl Schaefer creates. But that does not make her work any the less significant. I mention Milne and Schaefer here because I have already in another article[2] suggested how they form signposts of direction in contemporary Canadian landscape painting. Yet the achievements of Miss Carr are an indication of direction also, and she may soon be recognized more generally for the powerful artist that she is.

[2]See "Variations in Canadian Landscape Painting" (UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO QUARTERLY, X, 1940, 39-45).

MONTAIGNE'S CLASSICAL BOOKSHELF

WILLIAM HARDY ALEXANDER

IN a previous article[1] I discussed the views of Montaigne on Cicero, for whom he had, as may be recalled, a lack of reverence most astonishing in that age of Ciceronimaniacs and Ciceronasters. It seems worth while to supplement that investigation by a short study of his classical bookshelf in general; the idea is suggested particularly by his sixty-seventh essay, *On Books*, but must also be tracked through the whole range of his work. Such a study will as a matter of fact cover most of his reading; for the greater modern literatures had yet to be born. Montaigne read some French books, and also was competent in Spanish and Italian. He was not ill-disposed or supercilious towards works written in the Romance vernaculars; he thought, for example, that "Boccace his *Decameron*" and Rabelais were worth reading, though he could not find time for the chivalresque fantasies of the *Amadis de Gaula*. It was simply that he felt that time is the scarcest commodity of a thoughtful man, and that the great writers of antiquity had dealt penetratingly with the deep problems of human life and had recorded their conclusions on a high level of artistic form. "I care not much for new books, because the old seem fuller, and of stronger reason."[2]

But we must circumscribe even his classical reading: Montaigne professed little Greek. "Neither do I tamper much with Greek authors, my knowledge in that language being too little to read them with delight." Montaigne made no pretence to reading Plato with his feet on the fender, that charming hypocrisy affected by not a few. He was a Latinist, first, foremost, and practically all the time. "The Latin tongue is, as it were, natural to me; I understand it better than French."[3] "I had knowledge of the

[1]"The Sieur de Montaigne and Cicero" (UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO QUARTERLY, IX, 1940, 222-30).

[2]My quotations are from Charles Cotton's capable translation. I regret that in my former article I was careless enough to mischristen him Thomas. The errors of foot-note writers are verily legion and past finding out, and they are perpetuated by all too many willing copyists. All quotations in this article will be from the sixty-seventh essay except those for which another number is specifically given. These numbers are as in Cotton's edition; more recent editions have effected considerable change in this respect.

[3]Essay xcvi.

affairs of Rome long before I had any of those of my own house: I knew the Capitol and its platform before I knew the Louvre, and the river Tiber before I knew the river Seine. The qualities and fortunes of Lucullus, Metellus and Scipio have ever run more in my head than those of any of my own country."[4] This is not "progressive" education, I fear, but perhaps Montaigne's father was more interested in emphasizing education for his son than in pursuing the *ignis fatuus* of progress.

To return to the Greeks, of whom by the way he really knew a great deal more than his modest disclaimer would suggest, Montaigne thought poorly of Plato: "so much time lost by a man who had so many better things to say." Yet Plato is constantly, for all that, to be met with in his pages, and Aristotle too, perhaps known more through the Schoolmen and their Latin versions than from the original. The quotations from the tragedians are infrequent, and sound to me like tags drawn from some sort of *Bartlett's Quotations;* I doubt that he had much first-hand acquaintance in that field. He knew the historians, especially Herodotus; the orators do not seem to have been up his beat. Diogenes Laertius he would gladly have multiplied a dozen times, and Plutarch admittedly divided as a Greek the honours with Latin Seneca. "The familiarity I have had with these two authors, and the assistance they have lent to my age and books, wholly compiled of what I have borrowed from them, obliges me to espouse their quarrel and to stand up for their honour."[5] Plutarch is biographical, Diogenes Laertius anecdotal, and Seneca discontinuously edifying, and that explains all; they were good grist, all three, for Montaigne's particular mill. And if Montaigne was fundamentally a Latinist, yet it was a Greek, though of late descent, Plutarch, to whom he clave most in spirit: "Though my inclination would rather prompt me to imitate Seneca's way of writing, yet do I nevertheless more esteem that of Plutarch."[6] All in all a not incompetent Græcist, this country squire, but I must submit that his inclination, of which he has just spoken as prompting him Latinwards, more often than not ran away with his esteem.

For on the Latin side, Seneca is, of course, Montaigne's great exemplar. "I never seriously settled myself to the reading any book of solid learning but Plutarch and Seneca; and there, like the Danaides, I eternally fill and it as constantly runs out."[7] It is

[4]Essay CIII. [5]Essay LXXXIX. [6]Essay LXXIV. [7]Essay XXV.

simply impossible to separate Montaigne from Seneca, especially Seneca's *Moral Epistles;* the editors can supply book, chapter and verse for direct quotations, but as one who has spent most of his leisure for the last ten years on Seneca's prose, I can testify that there are whole paragraphs of Montaigne which may not contain a single direct quotation but which one familar with Seneca could literally pepper with foot-note references indicating from just what place in the *Epistles* the successive ideas come. Not that there would be much profit in that; it is not by passing from a single sentence or sentiment in Montaigne to its prototype in Seneca that one realizes how the two natures had grown into one, but through reading both of them in bulk. Bulk, to be sure, would not have appealed to Montaigne as a proper word to apply either to his *Essais* or to Seneca's *Epistles*, even though the sum of the efforts resulted in both cases in a very substantial whole; he thought of his Seneca rather as a series of charming parts and knew himself as characteristically discursive. "The knowledge I there seek is discoursed in loose pieces that do not engage me in any great trouble of reading long, of which I am impatient. 'Tis no great task to take one of them in hand, and I give over at pleasure; for they have no sequele or dependance upon one another. Their instruction is the cream of philosophy, and delivered after a plain and pertinent manner." Of the Senecan tragedies five appear in a rather limited quotation range in the course of the *Essais*, namely, the *Agamemnon*, the *Hercules Furens*, the *Hippolytus*, the *Oedipus*, the *Thyestes;* again I express the doubt whether Montaigne was much interested in the tragic form, even if in Seneca's plays he found once more the same sententiousness as the prose works manifest.

But enough of Seneca; everybody is aware that without Seneca's letters there could be no *Essais*, nor any Montaigne such as we have learned to know. What of other Latin authors on the classical bookshelf? "I have always thought," he says, "that in poesie Virgil, Lucretius, Catullus and Horace do many degrees excel the rest." As between Vergil and Lucretius he finds "the comparison is in truth very unequal, a belief that nevertheless I have much ado to assure myself in, when I meet with some excellent passages in Lucretius." Montaigne has sensed the truth, that there are mountain-peaks in Lucretius whereby he overtops Vergil, and reaches the highest point attained by Latin poetry. But Vergil he had become acquainted with early, thanks to a discreet tutor,

and that early acquaintance ripened into a sustained, if unimpassioned, love. Oh for such tutors around our efficiency-infested colleges of today! He winked at Montaigne's neglect of "prescribed prerequisites," and so "by these means I ran through Virgil's Aeneids, Terence, Plautus, and some Italian comedies . . . whereas, had he been so foolish as to have taken me off this diversion, I do really believe I had brought away nothing from college but a hatred for books, as almost all our young gentlemen do."[8] Vergil's *Georgics* he regarded as "the most accomplished piece of poetry"; but "there are some places in his Aeneids to which the author would have given a little more of the file, had he had leisure." The passage continues: "and the fifth book of his Aeneids seems to me the most perfect." This is the book mainly taken up with the funeral games celebrated in honour of Anchises by the dutiful Aeneas. Montaigne's is a very unusual verdict, and I am at a loss to explain it unless it is that he there found a classical setting for the spirit of knightly emulation not yet vanished in the times of Montaigne himself, or that the athletic achievements recalled to him his father, "a very active and sprightly fellow," who could do all sorts of things and play all sorts of games well, while Montaigne had to be satisfied with "only a full and firm vigour."[9]

While no one would think of challenging Catullus's place in the Big Four of Latin poetry, some will find the judgment on Catullus to read a little strangely today. "There is no good judgment . . . that does not incomparably more admire the equal politeness, and that perpetual sweetness and flourishing beauty that appears in Catullus his epigrams than all the stings with which Martial arms the tails of his." That, as some one has put it, Catullus is an artist and Martial a smartist, is sound enough, but one is daunted by the terms of praise applied to Catullus who, like the little girl whose curl hung down on her forehead, was, when he was bad, inclined to be very horrid indeed in his abuse. But I imagine from some frank passages in the *Essais* that Montaigne accepted as normal what a more refined taste or a more hypocritical pretence treats as obscenities.

He comments extensively on three other poets, Lucan, Ovid,

[8]Essay xxv. Like the "young gentleman" I recently fell in with, who thanked God in my presence that he would never have to read another line of Milton as long as he lived.

[9]Essay LXXIV.

and Terence. Of Lucan he says: "I also love Lucan, and willingly read him: not so much for his style, as for his own worth, and the truth and solidity of his opinions and judgments." Most moderns would reverse that view; Lucan's style, we feel, is glittering and commands our admiration, but there is a rhetorical quality about his opinions and judgments which causes them to ring false more often than not.[10] What attracted Montaigne in the poetry of Lucan, the nephew, was precisely what attracted him in the prose of Seneca, the uncle, specious moral judgments couched in epigram that at first hearing suggests finality. It is a considerable gift to appear to have said the last word on any subject.

Ovid he had first met through the *Metamorphoses:* "and with them I was so taken that, being but seven or eight years old, I would steal from all other divertisements to read them, both by reason that this was my own natural language, the easiest book that I was acquainted with, and, for the subject, the most accommodated to the capacity of my age."[11] The *Amores*, the *Ars Amandi*, the *Remedia Amoris*, the *Fasti*, the *Heroides*, the *Tristia*, the *Epistulae ex Ponto*,—all of these appear on the pages of the *Essais* along with the *Metamorphoses*, with which he had begun, but at the far end of life his interest failed rapidly; Ovid's "facility and invention" (excellent résumé of Ovid's powers) had lost their relish, so that "I can hardly have the patience to read him." However, we know from Montaigne himself that patience in respect of writers was with him no outstanding virtue.

Of Terence he was passionately fond; he found in him "so admirably lively the queintness and eloquencies of the Latin tongue" that to him he constantly returned, always discovering some fresh beauty. That Terence's plots are painfully bromidic Montaigne is well aware, but all that stage-deficiency he will forgive for the sake of his elegance, that is, his uncanny ability to find the *mot juste*. It is the lack of this gift that sets him against Plautus, but also, I suspect, the fact that Plautus is never quite able to qualify as a gentleman. Terence on the other hand was

[10]For example, IV, 519:

> From those who are to enter life, the gods
> Conceal the truth, to make them cling to life,
> That death is better.

[11]Essay xxv.

received in the Scipionic circle, and had the patronage of its members, if not their intimacy.

We must say something of Montaigne's preferences in Latin prose. That historians and biographers were his favourites will occasion no surprise: they are always the mine in which the aphoristic ethical philosopher burrows for the illustration of his sententiousnesses. He found in the Greek and Roman historians the proper men to write history because they were either makers of it or close to the makers. "The only good histories are those that have been writ by the persons themselves who commanded in the affairs whereof they write, or who have participated in them, or, at least, who have had the conduct of others of the same nature. . . . What can a man expect from a physician who will undertake to write of war; or from a mere scholar treating upon the designs of princes?" He found the historians "pleasant and easy," but he must have forgotten for the moment Thucydides and Tacitus. No Greek ever found Thucydides easy, no Roman Tacitus, to say nothing of us moderns. The long judgment on Tacitus delivered in the one hundred and second Essay is one of the completest studies of any ancient author offered us by Montaigne, and will repay the close attention of the classical scholar. Montaigne saw what seems to elude some of Seneca's critics, that the styles of Tacitus and Seneca are fundamentally the same, but that upon the foundation of the highly sophisticated Silver Latin manner, Tacitus has erected a peculiar fabric of his own preciosity. That preciosity seems quite definitely to have nurtured itself on Sallust. Of him Montaigne writes: "The short, round periods of Sallust best suit with my humour, yet I find Caesar much greater, and harder to imitate."[12] One is reminded of what the expert criminal investigators always assert, that the hardest signature to forge is that which is written in a simple, bold hand without quips, whirls, or quirks.

Among the historians Julius Caesar is approached with a deference rather unusual in a man of Montaigne's frank and outspoken independence. "I read this author with more reverence and respect than is usually allow'd to human writings; one while considering him in his person by his actions and miraculous greatness, and another in the purity and inimitable neatness of his language, wherein he not only excels all other historians, as Cicero

[12]Essay LXXIV.

confesses, but peradventure even Cicero himself." It is not without interest that so understanding a critic of Roman literature as Mackail[13] should likewise have felt, as some others of us are not ashamed to feel, that Julius Caesar stands side by side in prose with Lucretius in poetry as exhibiting at the peak what the Latin language could achieve by itself, without richness and beauty gathered from alien sources; the appreciation of Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* is the appreciation of *latine loqui* on the prose side.

Despite the fact that Montaigne professed himself little advantaged by Cicero's philosophy, using the words, "when I have spent an hour in reading him (which is a great deal for me) and recollect what I have thence extracted of juice and substance, for the most part I find nothing but wind," it is to be recorded that he quotes about one hundred and fifty times from his philosophical works. The *Tusculan Disputations* is the favourite, being referred to almost twice as often as any other work, but the *De Natura Deorum*, the *De Officiis*, the *De Divinatione*, the *De Finibus* and the *Academica* are all well represented. Oddly enough the dialogues *De Amicitia* and *De Senectute* are scarcely noticed, though they would seem naturally to fit into Montaigne's scheme. One judges, however, that he would willingly have traded most of the above in a job lot for the lost treatise of Brutus *De Virtute:* "it is best learning the theory of those who best know the practick."

The account of Montaigne's classical bookshelf would hardly be complete without at least a catalogue of the other Latin authors who parade (some would say, who are paraded) in his pages. In the field of history there is Cornelius Nepos, Quintus Curtius, Sallust, Livy, Suetonius, and Ammianus Marcellinus. Poets other than those already touched on are Ennius, Pacuvius, Lucilius, Tibullus, Propertius, Manilius, Publilius Syrus, Cornelius Gallus, Calpurnius Siculus, Juvenal, Persius, Martial, Silius Italicus, Ausonius, Rutilius, Prudentius, a genuinely catholic collection. Miscellaneous prose writers are both the Plinys, Petronius Arbiter, Quintilian, Aulus Gellius, Apuleius, Sidonius Apollinaris, Lactantius, Tertullian, and Saint Augustine. We are reminded by the last three names to say that Montaigne gives small evidence of interest in the Fathers of the Church and their writings; his Christianity was too emancipated to flourish on controversies that must

[13] J. W. Mackail, *Latin Literature* (second ed., London, 1896), 49.

have seemed to a man of his temperament exceedingly barren. We are Christians, he feels, for the same reason that we are Frenchmen and Germans, that is, not by conviction, but by accident. By retailing the above lists I would not wish it inferred that Montaigne is to be conceived of as systematically canvassing all these authors by a planned course of reading such as a professional scholar might lay out for himself over the months and the years; indeed I cannot refrain from pointing out that a well-kept commonplace book has often proved a wonderful thing on which to base a reputation for wide and profound reading.

A bookshelf suggests reading even if it does not assert it, and of reading there are various modes. I recommend, especially to over-conscientious readers, Montaigne's statement of his own manner of attack: "I do not bite my nails about the difficulties I meet with in my reading; after a charge or two, I give them over. . . . What I do not discern at first, is by persistency rendered more obscure. . . . A too obstinate endeavour darkens, stupefies, and tires my judgment." His reading was not then that of the professional scholar who camps on the trail of a recalcitrant sentence until, through a massing of parallel passages and a knowledge of the dark byways of a language, he captures its meaning, or, at all events, any meaning it can be said to have, for sometimes the interpretation is about as difficult to grasp as the passage interpreted. Montaigne was not reading for what we call scholarly purposes but, as one might say, for enjoyment not unmixed with edification, and towards that end it is not necessary to solve all the riddles of your text. "A charge or two," yes, but more than that is vanity and vexation of spirit. It is pleasant to have Montaigne admit his occasional fallibility in the matter of understanding an author in a foreign tongue; in the case of most commentaries that fallibility can be detected, not by that open confession which would disarm all criticism, but by a great silence when the crux is reached, wherein it becomes manifest that the great man was as much in the dark as ourselves.

As negatively I saw the modern man with his very just dislike of longwindedness and hyper-refinements coming into being in Montaigne, who expresses himself against both Cicero and Plato in those regards, so positively I fancy myself detecting the same evolution in him in his fondness for history and especially biographical history. Abstract philosophy is not the forte of many

men in any age; manuals of theoretical psychology or metaphysics they will not long tolerate in ours, but the psychology and philosophy of personality is another matter, and the records of our public libraries, great and small, supply the evidence of the acute modern interest in such subjects. That interest is compounded of the desire for a story alive with persons and events, of the pleasure derived from sitting in continuous if unconscious judgment on the thoughts and actions of others; there also enters in, in the case of lonely people, that opportunity for friendship, or even enmity, that the reading of biography affords. It is not, even at the best, too scholarly a pursuit, and that reminds me to repeat in these concluding words a warning against confusing scholarship with authorship. It would be a sad thing in most instances to demand the former of the latter. Montaigne at all events was a browser like many of ourselves, and on his own admission a browser chiefly in the fields of biography and practical ethics, and what we most like in him and his browsing is the development of a half-genial, half-cynical capacity for apt statement in ethical judgments. We like him for saying so aptly and often so concisely the very things we should like to have said ourselves with aptness and conciseness. I think it not unreasonable to suggest that he drew a large share of those eminently desirable qualities, which we have learned to appreciate so much and so sincerely since the radio has familiarized us with their opposites, from his classical bookshelf, about which I have tried to supply some few facts.

THE IDEA OF MAN

H. R. MacCallum

THE Delphic admonition "Know thyself" may still claim to be the clearest statement of the aim of philosophy; also, properly understood, of its distinctive subject-matter. No one has ever turned to philosophy without desiring, blindly or explicitly, to answer some form of the question, "Exactly who am I?" or, "Can my existence be given any sense?" And every philosophy is the ordering (subordination and superordination) among themselves of the various, multiple, partial answers a man gets to this question, whereby some sort of single and total answer is fashioned.

The first major point raised by this formulation concerns the relations of philosophy and science. The philosopher's concern with the physical universe is not, or should not be, strictly scientific, because it does not terminate upon the universe; the riddle of the sphinx is not for the philosopher the inner nature and structure of matter, the limits, if any, of the universe in space, or any puzzle of that order. Even in the deceptively childish conundrum current in antiquity, it will be remembered, the answer to the riddle no one could solve was, Man.

The fact is that there are two main sets of answers to the question "Who am I?", the first of which primarily concern a man as a physical object, a body, while the second primarily concern him as a a conscious person. The issue raised is that of the distribution or redistribution of weight between these two sets of answers; between the natural sciences and what, for distinctness' sake, might be called the anthropomorphic disciplines: history, economics, law, political and social theory, etc. One merit of the simple Delphic definition of philosophy is that it involves from the outset a shift in the usual distribution of weights and emphases between these two, putting us on guard against the excessive temporary prestige enjoyed by the natural sciences in our age; considerations derived from economic or social theory, from morals, aesthetics or history are as likely, perhaps more likely, to be relevant to this question than those derived from mechanics, chemistry, astronomy, physics, and the rest.

In an age like this such an assertion has to be defended. So let us look at the first set of answers. Mathematically regarded,

a man will be assigned certain linear, plane, and stereometric coefficients, a number which we call his age, etc. Mechanical science determines his weight, specific gravity, and the like; chemistry and physiology such things as his metabolism, endocrine equilibrium, idiosyncracies and allergic sensitiveness to certain substances; the biologist will specify, for instance, certain unit characteristics inherited according to Mendelian law. The psychologist as natural scientist, i.e. the experimental psychologist, will supply a psychograph, an I.Q., individual reaction-times and the like. This list of answers, a very incomplete sample of what the individual would obtain if he were thoroughly gone over by a board of experts, will yet serve to indicate the common tendency and defect which, philosophically speaking, all answers from the natural sciences exhibit.

The tendency is inherent in the method of these sciences, that of registering coincidences between ruler and ruled, i.e. between some part of a graduated scale and the object measured. The assumption behind this method, in turn, is that the observer can largely, if not entirely, stand outside the observation; he as a person is not implicated in it. We cannot here discuss the technical question of the allowance made for the subjective factor in the reading of scales; this "margin of error" itself is dealt with in a rigorously impersonal way. Nor is this the place to discuss the admitted breakdown of the assumption where events at the subatomic level are concerned. By and large it remains true that the elimination of the observer as a person is the condition of the natural sciences.

The defect common to this first set of answers is not inaccuracy. On the contrary these numbers and pointer readings do really and truly attach to me; even, if carried out in sufficient profusion, detail, and precision, they serve to specify me uniquely; they may also serve to indicate, within those limits which a prudent scepticism sets on taking the advice of experts, what things I should and should not attempt to do. Thus the defect is not irrelevance either, though it tends to be irrelevance, according to the strict theory of scientific positivism, in which "all is coincidence"—(these are the measurements, there is no explanation, no sense in asking why they should be just these and not other measurements). But then it is doubtful whether such positivism is more than a pose, useful for certain limited purposes. Certainly the history of science

shows these sets of measurements as developing against a provisional background of physical, chemical, or biological *theory* which is always understood to be explanatory and thus relevant to the properly metaphysical question, what total idea I am to form of man and of myself as man; for each such theoretical construction throws light, in varying degree, on what it means to be in space and in time, to be a piece of matter, to be alive, and I am all of these things.

No, the defect is not irrelevance, so much as minimal relevance. This may be illustrated in a kind of parable. If I say, "I want to know who I am," and someone taking out a measuring tape replies, "Just a minute and we'll see," it is the answer and not necessarily the question which is absurd. For all its numerical accuracy, the answer obtained would be relevant in only one situation, and that the "minimal" one, where I am suffering from amnesia, and my metrical record is kept at headquarters. Accordingly that construction, the one with the least human content, is forced upon my question. It is a case of an accurate answer being no answer at all. Presumably the giver retorts that my question is no question at all, but as I am indisputably aware that I am in full possession of my faculties, I am entitled to unload the burden of proof upon him.

When philosophy is variously asserted to begin with the sense of wonder, or of anguish, this is a way of pointing to its demand for a completely relevant answer. It is a way of saying that the question, "Can my existence be given any sense?" is not to be answered by the fiction that I can stand outside myself as an impartial second or third party, when in fact all my actions, emotions and thoughts are implicated in the question itself and the attempt to answer it. More than this: it is the recognition that no other self can be properly dealt with in terms of this fiction either. Where what we are concerned with is "anthropos" himself, the scientific aversion to anthropomorphism is, to say the least of it, misplaced; what other shape than his own could be more appropriate to man? Declare purpose, feeling, striving, conviction, faith and the like to be irrelevant and misleading factors which, in accordance with the assumption of the natural sciences, can and should be disregarded in the observer and denied of the object observed, and you make nonsense of even our most ordinary awareness of one another. The human order is one in which objective judgment is possible, but on condition that everything that makes it human

should not be removed to begin with; it is objectivity in regard to *subjects*, not to space and time, or electrons, or chemical compounds, or living cells and tissues. In this realm the "scientific elimination of everything personal" leads not simply to reduced relevance, but to the disappearance of what you set out to observe. In law, economics, history, ethics, sociology, there are, as E. H. Carr has reminded us, "no facts existing independently of what anyone thinks of them." Who makes a statement in any of these fields, why he makes it, what he believes, all this must in some degree be appreciated if the statement is to make sense. What the judge thinks about the facts in a case at law is itself one of the facts in that case. The judgment passed by the economic expert on tariffs or the control of foreign exchange is not a mere "opinion" but itself an important economic fact where it helps determine national policy, and so on. And in each of the cases of this sort, which could be indefinitely multiplied, the strictly relevant question "Who is this man, anyway?" demands some sort of answer if we are to understand the facts in the case; which is to say that the attempt to eliminate the personal, both in the observer and in the person observed, is ultimately self-defeating.

To compare the answers the philosopher obtains from the natural sciences with those given in the "anthropomorphic disciplines" should make clear the superior relevance of the latter to the question, what idea am I to form of man, and of myself as man? The answers are, that I am an historical figure in so far as records of my acts survive, and even if they do not, an anonymous historical figure in so far as these acts will affect the life of those yet unborn; that I am a legal person, possessing a complex of rights and responsibilities enforcible in police-court or elsewhere; that I am a political subject determined in my action by (and, in perhaps imperceptible ways, helping to determine) the organized network of power-relationships which marks this nation off from others; that I am a moral subject with duties toward myself and others, which are unique and therefore ineffable as far as legal codes are concerned; that I am an aesthetic subject—appreciator, critic, artist in my measure (i.e., that I am familiar with a certain range of human emotions, have myself a certain temperament, and am able in some degree to convey experience of this sort to others through a personally expressive fashioning of speech, gesture, intonation, through dramatic skill in the choice and arrangement of objects, acts, ideas, etc.); that I am economically subject to a

productive and distributive network of relations between people and economic goods which I, both as a worker and as a consumer, affect in some measure; that I am a social being, a vague term often used to lump together all human relatedness whatsoever, but perhaps more narrowly specifiable as membership in all those subordinate groupings (from the family to the chess-club) which cannot be regarded as primarily political or economic in their purpose; that I am a religious being, a statement which may be taken first, subjectively, to mean that as a man I am compelled to live by some myth as to the destiny of myself and my fellows which will be either one of the collectively elaborated myths which I find to hand (Atheism, Communism, Nazism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, etc.) or else a myth of private fabrication, or some mixture of the two; or second, phenomenologically, that the world of human experience is necessarily articulated for every man, in one way or another, under the fundamental religious categories of the holy (the extraordinarily attractive and repulsive) and the profane or commonplace.

These answers, each of them momentously relevant, and together constituting the central human fact, show why philosophy cannot afford to "sell out" to the natural sciences—a statement which naturally does not imply that it can ignore them or treat them with contempt. But in our times the prestige of these sciences has kept philosophy in a sort of muscle-bound catalepsy before the question whether there is an external world, and what the relation is between objects and *sensa*, and the like—questions which belong to the same sphere, and are therefore respectable, but which can largely be ignored in the taking of measurements, so that no natural science is seriously concerned with them. The relief which the recognition of the philosophical primacy of these central human facts brings with it, is no doubt the same (for in principle it is indifferent to the stage reached by natural science) as that reported of Socrates, when he turned from his earlier "hope in vortices, relative velocities, sockets, joints and the tension of sinews" to the conviction that the sense of life is to be sought in "Mind." Shaftesbury, among others, lays the emphasis adroitly in the right place when, discussing the current scientific dispute about the "simple ideas" of body and extension—today it might be the question whether matter is simply peculiarities in space-time or something more—he says: "The mathematicians are divided, and mechanics proceeds as well on one hypothesis as the other. My

mind is concerned on neither side. . . . Philosopher, let me hear concerning what is of some moment to me: concerning life, what the right notion is, and what I am to stand to upon occasion; that I may not, when life seems retiring, cry vanity, and at the same time complain that life is short and passing. This is of some moment to me, this is worth my while. If I can come to nothing certain here, what is all the rest to me?"

Philosophy may then be viewed as an attempt to reach some comprehensive notion of man which, though recognizing the restricted relevance of the natural sciences, yet assigns the central and primary role to the "anthropomorphic" or humanistic disciplines. Innumerable considerations, inhibited by the current academic view of what philosophy ought to be, at once throng to the surface. Here we have room to deal summarily with only two points.

First of all, when we speak of objectivity in regard to the personal (the order of subjects) a reference to some distinctive type of necessity is always implied. There are as many such specific types of necessity as there are disciplines in our second list. Indeed the very term "subject" in the sense of conscious self or person might be said to imply *subjection* to these various distinct but interlocking types of necessity, each embodied in some human institution, order, or network. Thus, for example, the legal obligation of completing work as contracted is one thing, and specifically different from the aesthetic compulsion whereby a rhythm or pattern must be completed in one way rather than another; and again from the moral duty of finishing a task in such a way as to be satisfied that one's best effort has been put into it; this from the economic necessity of terminating an enterprise with a credit balance; and all of them from the religious necessity of preparing in some way for the termination of life. In all these respects a reference to an objective, interpersonal network is required to define the subject himself.

This is to say that what I am is what others take me to be. But such a two-edged statement is easily misunderstood. It is true that we are none of us too sure what we are, that every man is blind about himself, unable to judge and estimate himself, that others, if he can get them to tell him, are in a better position to say what he is really like than he is himself. Superficially this might be held to justify me in sacrificing everything to create and nourish a favourable public self. The very derivation of the word "person"

from the actor's mask, or the voice sounding through it, seems to give weight to such histrionic practice, suggesting the equivalence of "person" and "impersonation." But more profoundly, the statement "I am what others take me to be" may mean that the reputed or public self is not a disguise but an unmistakable revelation of private personality. It is through the assumed role that the actor's real quality, his ability or the reverse, is made publicly manifest. Nothing shapes the person more decisively than the attitudes he adopts and the roles he takes up in the various networks. When what began as a role ends in earnest, when the life grows into the attitude, personally characteristic and expressive being is achieved. Or again, if it is extremely trivial of me to seek others out with the intention of impressing them, nothing could well be more momentous than genuinely to hand myself over to another for consultation or advice, or in trust, or in any other way.

The same dialectic between the individual and the network arises in respect of freedom. Superficially freedom is revolt against necessity, insubordinate assertion of the self against the sovereignty of such aesthetic, legal, economic, religious, political, moral networks of relatedness as we have pointed to. But the assumption that the self means or *is* anything apart and in divorce from these necessities is one we have just seen grounds to question. Hume's destructive analysis of the idea of self is valuable as calling for a revision of that idea, which he did not make. Namely, the popular notion is a survival of the very primitive idea of "a little man inside the chest" (or the belly) whom the anatomist's scalpel ought to reveal, though we all know by now that it doesn't; the error is to insist that if the self is real it must be in principle an observable entity, a datum. But everywhere we find that to give meaning to the self is possible only in reference to the various networks; that the self is not something given, a datum, but a problem or better, a task, which does not yet fully exist except as a task exists before it is completed, a task to be realized socially, in terms of common action and then only over a stretch of time. To confine the self to the present and look for it purely "within" is to transform the *me* into an *it* and thereby make sure that I shall be found missing. Everything thus points to a corresponding revision of the notion of freedom. True, and not illusory, freedom does not reject but accepts "subjection" in the senses outlined above. Just as it is through the various specific human networks that the quality of the person takes shape, so it is only through submission to the

necessities governing each that free—and that is effective, and effectively personal—action is possible.

However inadequately, the general outline which philosophy would take in accordance with the Delphic formulation of its object has been sketched. The idea of man would be the networks of historical, economic, aesthetic, religious, ethical, legal, political, and social determination, not forgetting, in due subordination, those provided by the natural sciences: or rather perhaps it would be the network of these networks. I myself as man would be knowable as an answering complex, to be specified in terms of the "places" I occupy in these various series and networks, over a duration of time.

It remains to say something about interrelations. An argument *about* philosophy, such as this, which does not pretend to be an exposition of specific metaphysical content, must be satisfied to state that there are manifold tensions and conflicts between the various constitutive aspects and activities of man, which it is the object of philosophy to resolve; this is another way of stating the characteristic philosophical demand for completeness, total relevance, a comprehensive answer to its question. But there is only too attractive a variety of ways of evading this demand. Accordingly we find in the present, when philosophy has so largely failed to perform its proper task or to concentrate upon its proper object, a proliferation of pseudo-philosophies. Their common feature is a method of reduction whereby one human function is taken as substantive, constituting the "real" man, and the others reduced to the status of adjectives, appearances, or disguises thereof. With Marx the real man is the worker; the real as opposed to the illusory or reputed self, is the actual place a man occupies in the process of production—a view whose affinity with the capitalist reduction of persons to "hands" in industry should be noted, and is not an accident. Everything else, such as law, politics, morals, is an "ideological superstructure," a transposition into other and less proper terms of these basic economic realities. It is true that the Marxist protests that he does not deny all autonomy, all effective reality to these other things, but these protests are revealed as perfunctory, to say the least, by the basic tenet of Marxist orthodoxy that economic forces will blast their way through to their effects *whatever the "superstructure" may be.* With Freud, the "real" man is the sexual function, psychologically rather than biologically conceived (as libido, mechanism of repres-

sion, complex, transference, sublimation, etc.). Freud's excursions into art, mythology or social theory (again, in spite of his followers' protests that it is not Freud but we who oversimplify) reveal the unmistakable *parti pris* of regarding everything else as a disguise for this pervasive sexuality. With the social relativism of various schools of anthropology since Durkheim, the "real" man is the tribe: the substantive terms are terms like society, collective representation, "folkways." Thinkers who do not recoil from the conclusion that even astronomy reveals more about folkways than it does about the heavens will be inclined to agree with M. Halbwachs that separate individuality is itself a tribal representation, authorized momentarily by the collective mind at a given stage of development. Though why anyone should pay any attention to such views, which are, taken at the face-value set by themselves, simply products and illustrations of the folkways of contemporary France or America, something thrown up now to be washed away later, is indeed another question. With the aestheticism which began with the Romantics, and still flourishes in some quarters, the "real" man is the artist: law, economics, morals, etc., must either be auxiliary to the prime object of converting life into a poem, a beautiful symphony, or else they are obstacles to be destroyed. With a man like Hobbes who views everything *sub specie legis*—it is true Hobbes is long dead, but logical positivism is with us—all things else are sacrificed to the category of legal convention. And so on, though not indefinitely: there are only just so many startling "discoveries" about man to be made by this reductive procedure.

The point of calling them pseudo-philosophies is not to deny that each serves to throw light, if a somewhat fitful and treacherous light, on the subject of man. It is important to recognize that man *is* worker, or artist, or legal subject, and is such by his very essence. The point is rather to assert that any philosophy deserving the name must exhibit balance and sense of proportion enough to recognize that man is also essentially and necessarily all these things at once, and to do full justice to each constitutive activity and aspect of human nature, denying none. The philosopher will seek to resolve the tensions between one and another, but not by the easy and spectacular method of short-circuiting which we have just examined. On the contrary, to pursue the electrical metaphor, he will patiently preserve each separate current, leading them all into a common switchboard where the systematic ordering

of forces in tension permits him to obtain effects which are at once elaborate, harmonious and precise.

Thus, to conclude, the readiest test of philosophical defect is that a theory sets out to explain away any one of the authentic constituents of human personality. On this score alone, philosophy should pay far more serious attention to religion than it does, for *prima facie* there is as much evidence that man is by nature a religious being as that he is by nature an artist or a worker. And in fact there is no more astonishing illustration of the havoc and intellectual chaos wrought by the proliferation of pseudo-philosophies than the situation with which the common man is now confronted in this field. He supposes himself to believe, along with multitudes of other men both primitive and civilized, in the actual existence of a Being, personal or superpersonal (but not subpersonal as a law or principle would be), who created and sustains all things. On every hand he finds it explained to him that he does not and cannot believe this; what he thinks he believes is really just the Oedipus complex, the continuous germ-plasm, or the life-force of the species; the economic process in so far as we fail to take hold of and control it, i.e. in so far as it seems mysterious and uncontrollable; the tribal sense of community, or "the sum of the social consciousness," and a variety of other things so bewilderingly various, so clearly incompatible with one another, as to be ludicrous. I imagine that the plain man who tried to survey this field would, however, be less amused than alarmed and repelled by what he found, and perhaps rightly so.

However, further discussion of such an issue would take us beyond the limits set in this paper. The concluding point of these reflections is that it is unphilosophical to restrict authentic human experience to any one of its ranges. To narrow it down, with the natural sciences, to the experience of external sense; with aestheticism, to the experience of aesthetic form; to confine it to moral experience or economic experience, or religious experience, or social experience or any other single distinctive type of conscious happening, is in the end to lower, impoverish, mutilate, and dehumanize the notion of man. Philosophy holds tenaciously to the variety of this experience in the whole wealth of its specific forms, and proceeds on the assumption that the most likely way of achieving a comprehensive and completely relevant answer to its question, is to put upon this experience the highest, and not the lowest possible construction.

THE VINLAND RIDDLE

T. B. Irving

IF you enter the Gallery of Armour of the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto today, the first display that will strike you is a collection of Norse weapons. The collection is small, but it is significant, for it has helped to focus attention on a part of North American history that by some scholars has been placed in the realm of myth, and by others in the field of possibilities which, though interesting, could scarcely hope to be proved.

The Beardmore relics, as they are called, consist of a Viking sword and axe, in good condition considering the length of time they have been buried, and the metal grip of a shield whose leather and wood have long since decayed. These weapons are of the eleventh century, and they were found at Beardmore, Ontario, a few miles east of Lake Nipigon on the Blackwater River, and about three hundred miles from the nearest tidewater on James Bay.

They were found by James Dodd, a Port Arthur railwayman who is also an amateur prospector. Over a decade ago, in 1930, he claims he unearthed them while working on his Beardmore claim along the Canadian National Railway line, and the story of how they came into the possession of the Royal Ontario Museum is almost as interesting as the conjectural history of how they happened to be deposited at Beardmore.

Dodd's story is that he noticed a promising vein of white quartz that ran perpendicularly down a low cliff of rock and into the ground. He located this vein further out in his claim, but between it and the dike lay a clump of birch trees of twenty-inches' diameter. He had to blast these trees out of his way, and as he was digging where their roots had been, he came across the relics, along with an iron pick which was in such good condition that he fitted it to a haft and used it till it was lost from his knapsack.

It was a sheer stroke of luck that Dodd uncovered this evidence, but circumstances almost prevented the rest of the world from finding out about it. James Dodd was in no position to realize the value of his find, though an Ontario forest ranger later testified that shortly afterwards the railwayman called him in to see the rusty pattern of the sword four feet down on the rock at the bottom of the

trench. But the relics became such a nuisance to Mrs Dodd that she insisted they be gilded or tossed out of the house; and it was only five years ago that a school inspector brought the matter to the attention of Dr Currelly, Curator of the Museum, who subsequently bought them for five hundred dollars.

At first the experts were sceptical, not of the pieces themselves, but of the apparent incongruity of such a find being made so far from salt water. Yet, as the evidence was sifted, it became quite obvious that the weapons were genuine Norse armour of approximately 1000 A.D., and as late as 1937 bits of crumbling iron that might have formed the boss of the shield grip were found in the trench. This tallied with Dodd's own story, one too simple for him to invent, that he had had to scrape away an egg-shaped crust before he could reach the grip when he unearthed it.

Does this mean that we have proof, factual evidence, that America was not only discovered but also partly explored five hundred years before Columbus? Did an expedition sail up the Albany or Moose River from James Bay in the early eleventh century and portage over the watershed leading to the Great Lakes? The discovery of these relics in such a conspicuous yet concealed place would seem to indicate that the armour was either cached by its owner to be picked up later, or if the owner had died, laid in burial with him along the quartz vein in case his companions wanted to return to claim his body.

This find would be unimportant in itself, but that it may confirm former evidence, and provide a focus and connecting link for a host of minor data that by their cumulative weight help to push our history back several centuries. Hitherto, Helluland, Markland and Vinland have been sought along the Atlantic seaboard, and because of the dearth of evidence, the story of the Sagas has been left in its seeming vagueness. But these claims are more definite, and they all point in one direction only: if the Vikings reached America, they reached it via Greenland and Hudson Bay. Re-read in this light, even the Kensington Rune Stone, which was found in 1895 in Minnesota, and recounts a supposed journey from Norway in 1362, must be revalued, and Mr Holand's work in this matter may at last be vindicated.

The first of this further evidence is strangely enough not archaeological but linguistic. Mr J. W. Curran, the editor of the Sault Ste Marie *Daily Star*, has long been interested in the Indian

background of Canadian history. Now, Indian words generally have some self-explanatory etymology, but he was always worried because the word common to the Algonquian family of languages for "whiteman" does not seem to have any simpler meaning. However, he finally localized the word in Moose Cree, as *wemistikose*, meaning "wooden boat." This is doubly significant, for it would show that the first white men sailed to America in wooden boats, and that they landed in or about James Bay, where the Moose Crees met them, named them, and passed the term along to the southern Algonquian nations like the Ojibway and Montagnais.

This may possess no further apparent importance, but Samuel de Champlain records the use of this word in the memoirs of his second voyage up the Saint Lawrence in 1610, and records it in the Montagnais form *Matigoche* or *Mistigoche* (both spellings are recorded). The earliest knowledge we have of any white man in the Bay was of Henry Hudson himself in the same year—clearly too short an interval for the expression to pass hundreds of miles, in an accepted sense, and with intervening sound shifts, from the Hudson Bay region to the Saint Lawrence basin. The only alternative solution is that the Saint Lawrence Indians in 1610 were already familiar with white men, and that their acquaintance had commenced around Hudson Bay countless years before. Indeed, they also told Champlain that they were in the habit of trading their furs already, this long before the days of Brûlé, Radisson, and the Hudson's Bay Company.

Mr Curran has collected other data and artifacts, mostly dug up along the shores of the Great Lakes, and has published his findings in a book called *Here was Vinland*, so that they would not be lost. When we assemble his work, Mr Holand's suggestions in *Westward from Vinland*, Nansen's panorama in *Northern Mists*, and the publications of the Norroena Society, a whole field of study opens up. The picture that comes before our eyes is of the Norse pushing from Scandinavia to Iceland, and thence to Greenland, and not stopping there, but keeping on to the far West. If we read the Sagas now, keeping in mind the evidence unearthed from Lake Ontario to Minnesota, we gradually realize that the easiest route for the Vikings to follow was not along the Atlantic coast, but Hudson Strait, the Bay, and the great rivers.

Traditionally, despite a total lack of proof, we have thought of Helluland as Labrador, Markland as Newfoundland, and Vinland

as the coast anywhere from Nova Scotia southward. None the less these names can be just as easily transferred to the rocky shores of Hudson Strait and Bay, the woods of James Bay with its broad strands at low water, and the finer forests and plains south and west of the sea, which are easily reached by way of the great rivers of the region, as the records of the Hudson's Bay Company show. Most of those writers who have published maps of a supposed New England route have only drawn a lacework and even clutter of possible voyages between Greenland and the Atlantic seaboard. But it is strange indeed that no proof should be forthcoming from the eastern seacoast of any visits, since the Sagas manifestly present fact rather than legend. As Kendrick, who in a foot-note of his *History of the Vikings*, lightly dismisses the Kensington Stone as a "forgery," himself says: "Leaving generalities aside, then, the content of the Wineland sagas is in itself sufficient to demonstrate that they are based not upon legend but upon fact." Yet one cannot see how this noted scholar can claim to have sifted the evidence properly when his map of America covers only the bare eastern coastline of the continent!

There seems to be one reason why we have been led astray: the tale of Vinland was associated with grapes, and therefore Vinland had to be sought from Maine southwards. This error is said to have been fostered by Adam of Bremen, who assumed the Latin-derived meaning. However, if the name is taken in the meaning of "Meadowland" rather than "Wineland," then the whole emphasis is shifted from a vine-clad country to a region such as is the Great Claybelt of northern Ontario, or, if the Norsemen are found to have penetrated so far, the Prairies.

Immediately much additional material is cleared up. A passage like "Between Winland and Greenland is Ginnungagap; it proceeds from the sea that is called 'Mare Oceanum,' which surrounds the whole world," which puzzled even Nansen,[1] makes sense with Ginnungagap as treacherous Hudson Strait, and the Outer Ocean conceivably becoming the great Bay, which some have suggested would be better named the Canadian Sea because of its vast extent. The reference on the Kensington Stone to "a journey of discovery from Vinland westward" (Curran says "over the west") might rather be construed to mean that the expedition of King Magnus of Norway (*c.* 1362) followed some known westerly route,

[1]See his *In Northern Mists*, II, 239.

and not west and then south from Greenland to Nova Scotia or New England. Most authorities have been against this voyage to Minnesota because they thought the trip over the Appalachians impossible, and that up the Saint Lawrence rapids far-fetched; but they seemingly forget that Henry Hudson had the sailing directions for his last and fatal voyage prepared in 1608 from the Danish of Ivar Bardsson, a priest who had sailed from Bergen in the fourteenth century and left a record of visiting places which do not appear to tally intimately with Greenland. Salvador de Madariaga, in his recent work on Columbus, also mentions the Iceland voyage of the traditional discoverer of America, though he overlooks one good reason for his journey there.

Vinland was of vast extent, as reference to the hours of daylight and the climate indicate. This evidence is as perplexing as that connected with the *daegr* or day's voyage, but the fact that the Vikings noted and recorded the longer days, and sometimes the lack of snow in the south, may enable us to place their settlements by latitude. They also speak of an expanse where no grass grew, and of a luxuriant region with self-sown wheat, whence the name of Vinland the Good was more likely to have arisen. It is no more inconceivable that the Vikings should have covered a small part of America than that they should have ascended the Tagus and Guadalquivir to attack the heart of Arab Spain, or overrun the swamps of Russia to trade with Byzantium and Baghdad.

In fact, the latter leads us to a clue for their motive in coming to America: the Viking's great trade with the East at that time was in furs. It appears from the Sagas that the Norse met two types of reception from the indigenes in Vinland: many a bloody fight with the Skraeling, whose skin boat has been identified with the Eskimo kayak; and more peaceful trading relations with another people. The extent of this is uncertain, but from the stories it appears that a trade was carried on with Vinland, and this not only in furs, but in falcons and in timber, which was scarce in Greenland and Iceland. Moreover, some of this wood was exotic, as the name *môssur*, which has been thought to be birch or even bird's-eye maple, would show. We have the picture of a steady, though not too brisk commerce with the other settlements, while church records from Norway and Iceland tell of ecclesiastical missions even from Europe. Indeed, there must have been some

settlement, because as late as 1347 a Markland (*sic*) ship is reported to have reached Iceland.

The extent of this trade we can never know; we forget that the most frequent intercourse would have been with Greenland, and there our records are slimmest, for the materials were lacking for preserving them. In Iceland the facts recorded would be less accurate, and in Scandinavia the tales would seem so strange that they would run great risk of being interlarded with fiction. The Old World itself had its own travail: Hulagu's destruction of the remnant of the 'Abbāsid Empire in 1258, and the rise of the Hanse towns, dislocated commerce, so that the Norse traders were forced to yield their position; and the arrival of the Black Death in Norway, in 1349, blocked further enterprise for years to come. The ensuing poverty bred ignorance, and the Vinland story, as it seeped into the rest of Europe, became mixed with the legends of the Fortunate Isles, which themselves have never been well explained.

If we assume that the Norsemen settled down, it would be to some form of agriculture as it had been in Iceland and Greenland, and they probably utilized Lake Superior copper for tools, since their art seems to have declined rapidly if Mr Curran's trading axes can prove anything. We cannot at present know the extent of any settlement, for no archaeological research has been done in this region; but work, similar to that of Nørlund or Roussell in Greenland and the Orkneys, done along Hudson and James Bays and the northern lakes and rivers, should yield some evidence. Nørlund has shown how the physical type in Greenland degenerated through malnutrition, even while there still was sufficient contact with Europe for clothing to be affected by European styles; and Stefánsson in his recent book on the *Unsolved Mysteries of the Arctic* has put forth the plausible suggestion that the Greenland colonies disappeared through absorption by the surrounding and invading Eskimo. The causes of such disappearance by absorption readily suggest themselves.

In the first place, within the colony itself there was probably not sufficient population nor immigration to give a complete social life to settlements that would be scattered over thousands of square miles of territory; the Vinlanders would therefore, through lack of population and consequent intermarriage, sink to a lower level of culture, especially in comparison with Scandinavia, losing

knowledge of many essential arts and practising those they retained with less skill; they could not find iron (they must have passed the Belchers and Keneewaw by) and would have to turn to copper rather than even bronze; their agriculture, already less diversified because of Greenland conditions, would be hampered by the lack of seeds and cattle; and the type of rock might cause them to change from stone to wood for building purposes even as the later French and English did. Thus their impulse for survival would teach them to adopt Amerindian practices, such as the use of maize and skin garments, adoption of which, combined with miscegenation, would soon spell assimilation, as Gisle Oddson's strange comment, "ad Americae populos se converterunt,"[2] might be interpreted. We may remember how they were absorbed in Sicily and Russia, where they were the rulers.

I recall reading years ago in Stefánsson's *My Life with the Eskimo* how he met blond Eskimos with blue eyes on Prince Albert Sound, in Victoria Land in the western Arctic, who, he thought, might be descendants of the Norse Greenlanders, a supposition no more incredible than that which links certain types of Eskimo art to Finnish culture; while Mr Curran brings up reports of white Indians amongst the James Bay Crees. Moreover, there is the old list of assertions about Mandan culture being derived from Welsh or Norse; and while I am inclined to put little faith in these stories, yet the *coureurs de bois* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries heard persistent rumours of Indians to the West, white like the French or the Hudson Bay traders. I suggest that tribes like the Mandans may have absorbed any Norse that were left, and that the traditional stories of white Indians grew up on the basis of former conditions, so that Canadians like La Vérendrye (the first white North American to reach the Rockies) were told these stories by the Crees and Assiniboines; but the interval had been so long that when La Vérendrye met them in the 1730's, he was disappointed at not finding a tribe with European features or culture. Similarly the later Métis were inclined to appear Indian to the white observer, as white blood among the southern Negro may be recognized grudgingly as the race bleaches out.

Admittedly, the contribution of the Vikings to our history is more sentimental than serious; but when we consider the long interval between Cabot's first appearance off the coast of Canada

[2]Quoted in Nansen, II, 101, as referring, supposedly, to the year 1342.

and Champlain's successful founding of Port Royal and Quebec, there should be no objection to pushing our recorded history back a few more centuries by means of proper research. It would be interesting to study how the building of canoes or shelters or the making of pottery might have been affected in certain regions. The whole field has never been covered in detail and with a unified approach: bits of information creep up here and creep up there, but the early history of our continent has not been moulded into a composite narrative out of the mass of national sources. It is exasperating to learn of Irish and Viking voyages, of later but pre-Columbian Danish, Breton, and Basque seamen, of immigrant white Aztec gods, of the Maurepas Rune Stone, found by La Vérendrye in the Dakotas and now lost, of further marked rocks from Fort George in Ungava to Spokane, Washington, and to discover no correlation between them. The Kensington Stone was discovered in 1898 under trees ten to forty years old whose roots had bent around it, and the Brantford bronze axe was recognized in 1926, by the Smithsonian Institution, to be of European origin. Yet the one is still considered a fraud by some, and the other is ignored.

I am holding no brief for Dodd's story, which is criticized elsewhere this month,[3] but it is time that a concise statement of the range of evidence in this entire field of enquiry were made, and the attitude towards our pre-history clarified. We must thank men like Holand and Curran who have worked unthanked till now, but we must do more than that and see that such an important subject is taken out of the hands of amateurs and made the object of genuine research. The proper attitude is no longer one of scepticism, but a scientific treatment of the matter.

[3]O. C. Elliott, "The Case of the Beardmore Relics" (*Canadian Historical Review*, Sept., 1941).

REVIEWS

THE METHOD OF EDMUND WILSON[1]

E. K. Brown

Perhaps the time has come to inquire what are the sources of Edmund Wilson's power as a critic. He is now the author of five distinguished and varied volumes in criticism: *Axel's Castle* (1931), a search for the main thread in European letters in the half-century following 1875; *The Triple Thinkers* (1938), a miscellany of ten essays on figures and tendencies from the Romantic age down to our own time; *To the Finland Station* (1940), his most massive work by far, a spot-lighted account of the writing of history from Michelet through Marx and Engels to the moment in 1917 when Lenin stepped from his train into the process of history; *The Wound and the Bow* (1941), which, with Dickens as its most elaborated study, inquires into the relationship between psychological disabilities and literary achievement in the last two hundred years; and finally *The Boys in the Back Room*, a much slighter production than any of the others, belonging also to this past season, and estimating the leading tough guys among recent American novelists. This body of criticism, along with uncollected articles and reviews contributed chiefly to the *New Republic*, make up, it is generally agreed, the most luminous and sensible addition that anyone on this continent has made to literary criticism in a very long time.

Read one after another what impression do these books make? Whatever tools he may use, whatever may be the main purpose of anything he writes, at the core of Edmund Wilson's criticism is a fine ability to recognize the aesthetic quality of his subject. He may call his essay on the author of *The Sun Also Rises* "Hemingway,

[1] *Axel's Castle: A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931, $2.50.

The Triple Thinkers: Ten Essays on Literature, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co. [Toronto, George J. McLeod], 1938, $2.75.

To the Finland Station: A Study in the Writing and Acting of History, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co. [Toronto, George J. McLeod], 1940, $5.00.

The Wound and the Bow: Seven Studies in Literature, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co. [Toronto, Thomas Allen], 1941, $3.75.

The Boys in the Back Room: Notes on California Novelists, San Francisco, Colt Press, 1941, $2.50.

Gauge of Morale"; but he will pause now and then in his description of Hemingway's moral evolution to say something like this:

> Here [in *Men Without Women*] Hemingway has mastered his method of economy in apparent casualness and relevance in apparent indirection, and has turned his sense of what happens and the way in which it happens into *something as hard and clear as a crystal but as disturbing as a great lyric.*

In the essay "Flaubert's Politics," we find him responding to the emotional weight of a masterpiece so little honoured in the English-speaking countries, the *Education sentimentale*, with admirable acumen and intensity:

> There are no hero, no villain, to arouse us, no clowns to amuse us, no scenes to wring our heart. Yet the effect is deeply moving. It is the tragedy of nobody in particular, but of the poor human race itself reduced to such ineptitude, such cowardice, such commonness, such weak irresolution—arriving, with so many fine notions in its head, so many noble words on its lips, at a failure which is all the more miserable because those who have failed are hardly conscious of having done so.

It is the kind of sensitiveness these passages show that enabled Edmund Wilson to write the most judicious of all essays on Marxism and letters. "Marxism," he says, "by itself can tell us nothing whatever about the goodness or badness of a work of art. . . . What Marxism *can* do is throw a great deal of light on the origins and social significance of works of art."

The origins and social significance of works of art, this is the main preoccupation of Edmund Wilson himself. In his inquiries he makes much use of psychology and even of psychoanalysis: and nowhere so much as in *The Wound and the Bow*. If one reads side by side the study of Proust in *Axel's Castle* and the study of Dickens in the more recent collection, the increasing emphasis on psychological and psychoanalytical techniques becomes impressive. How skilfully Edmund Wilson uses tools dangerous in clumsy hands can be shown from one strand in the long essay on Dickens.

In Dickens's life the crucial event occurred when he was twelve: his father having been imprisoned for debt, Charles was set to work in a blacking factory. For six months he was jeered at as the little gentleman,[2] and sought to hide from his fellow-employees that the rest of the Dickens family was living in the Marshalsea; he finally gave way to neurotic fits. His mother, even more than his father,

[2]Edmond Wilson interprets John Forster's account of the episode in this fashion; actually there is nothing in Forster's text to require the interpretation of "little gentleman" as a gibe.

resisted his pleas to be liberated from the horrible world into which he had been dropped. "These experiences produced in Charles Dickens a trauma from which he suffered all his life." What were the consequences for his art? First, a strange and powerful sympathy for the enemies of society, especially for those who meditate or commit murder: Edmund Wilson would have us note the astonishing immediacy with which Dickens renders the consciousness of Jonas Chuzzlewit. Second, a hatred of the institutions and usages of society, whether the Court of Chancery in *Bleak House*, or the Circumlocution Office in *Little Dorrit*, or the conventions of the world of fashion and title throughout almost all his fiction. Along with this hatred, which lends fire and bite not only to his invective but to his satirical portraits, goes a power to convey the oppressiveness of confinement, whether in a prison, or a school, or a cruel home, or even simply a mood. Other psychological strands are woven with this one to make the hundred pages on Dickens one of the subtlest inquiries into his nature and art. The same method is employed with Kipling: the six years he spent with a horrible aunt, the years from six to twelve, leave their trace on all he wrote, up to the time of his unfortunate feud with his Vermont brother-in-law: the rest of his work was coloured and envenomed by that feud. And so with John Jay Chapman, with Edith Wharton (in an essay disfigured by incomplete information, but brilliant in its intuitions), with Hemingway.

A strong sense of the social pressures upon artist and work of art complements the reliance on psychological interpretation. Like Louis Cazamian (whom, strangely, he does not appear to have studied), Edmund Wilson is curious to relate even the specialties of technique to the world in which the artist lives. Many readers were impressed by the lifelikeness of the psychological portraits in *Axel's Castle:* good as they are, that book is essentially a book about social pressures, a book relating how the typical great artists in letters in the period from 1875 to 1925 came to feel themselves homeless and lonely, how in consequence Yeats retired to his visionary systems and his seances, Eliot to his Elizabethan rhythms and his Caroline sermons, Proust to his cork-lined chamber and the savouring of his emotions and sensations in years gone by. They did what they did as artists mainly because the society in which they lived was what it was. The sense of social pressures has grown upon Edmund Wilson; in his studies of Flaubert and James

in *The Triple Thinkers* it brought novel and striking results; it has come to its full force in *To the Finland Station.*

In this "study in the writing and acting of history," like Coleridge, Taine, Arnold, and the other masters of criticism since the Revolution, Edmund Wilson passes far beyond the area of *belles-lettres* to occupy himself learnedly and anxiously with the most general problems in modern thought and action. In a brief first section he presents Michelet, Renan, Taine, and Anatole France, interpreting the Revolution, and registering, often with deep unconsciousness, the wounding inadequacies of the society and culture about them. Michelet could be penetrating as well as feverishly alive, in his account of the national past: when the present was his theme, or when it got in the way of his vision of the past, he was often superficial, utopian, and even downright silly. Worse was to come:

> Now look at Renan and Taine. With Michelet, the man has created the mask. But here it is the profession that has made it: Renan with his great belly, his pudgy hands, his round and puffy face, his heavily drooping porcine eyelids—the most intelligent and honest of all the French abbés, but still fundamentally a French abbé; Taine (in Bonnat's portrait), with his spectacles and his myopic-looking eyes, his bald dome, his wilting imperial, his high conversational eyebrows —the most brilliant of all the French professors, but still from tip to toe a French professor.

Social pressures once more! How boldly and vividly they are stressed, reminding one that among his many literary ventures, Edmund Wilson is the author of a novel, *I Thought of Daisy*, extraordinarily attractive in its way of capturing the appearance of things. Michelet's thought reflects the agitation of the years between the fall of Napoleon and the eclipse of Louis Napoleon; Taine's and Renan's the despair of the nation defeated in 1870; Anatole France's the deliquescence of the Third Republic. These figures are much too rapidly done, with the nervous haste of one who is eager to get on to what he considers his real theme: as a result there is too much simplification, too much generalization, too few passages of the kind quoted. The portrait of Anatole France is specially inadequate.

The real theme of the book is the rise of socialist and communist analysis of history. Marx and Engels are studied in much greater detail; and again social pressures are stressed. It is suggested that into the fibre of their thinking as well as of their lives came the poison of conspiratorial exile. Marx's impatience with idealistic

socialism, with the gospel of human fraternity, is referred in part to the venom in him, not an intrinsic part of his nature but a deposit of his way of life. A brief comment on his recurrent images enables us to "see through to the inner obsessions at the heart of the world-vision of Marx. Here all is cruel discomfort, rape, repression, mutilation and massacre, premature burial, the stalking of corpses, the vampire that lives on another's blood, life in death, and death in life." Marx's hate is an expression of a trauma, as powerful as the one from which Dickens suffered, and as necessary to the formation of his works. As with Dickens, this trauma is an effect of social pressures. In the presentation of his dealings with his own family, and with Lassalle, Bakunin and Engels, Edmund Wilson again has recourse to the novelist's art: the group centring in Marx lives with a fullness and intensity rare in biography, much as Marcus Aurelius lives in Arnold's essay, or Burns in Carlyle's. The stamp of a creative imagination is on this middle section of the book.

It is also on parts of the closing section, an account of Lenin and Trotsky. How illuminating to the Anglo-Saxon reader, how fully in the tradition of the best criticism in the language is Edmund Wilson's picture of the house in which Lenin grew up as it appeared when the critic visited Simbirsk a few years ago:

> From outside the low yellow frame-house on the broad provincial street without curbs that is hollowed out like the bed of a river, seems to verge on the oriental; but going inside, the American visitor finds himself in the presence of something so perfectly comprehensible and familiar that he can hardly believe he has travelled so far from Concord and Boston, that he is back in Tsarist Russia. . . . The furniture is mostly mahogany, and almost exactly the sort of thing that you would find in your grandmother's house. In the living-room, low-ceilinged and simple, there is a long old-fashioned grand piano, on whose music-rack rests the score of Bellini's blameless *Puritani*, with dried ferns pressed between the pages. . . . This was evidently also a place where people read, studied their lessons, and played chess. There are chessmen, a map on the wall, a little sewing-machine. Elsewhere there are book-cases and book-shelves; Zola, Daudet and Victor Hugo, Heine, Schiller and Goethe, as well as the Russian classics; and many maps and globes: Russia, Asia, the two hemispheres, the world.

How close Lenin is brought to us, and it will be the same with his years with his mother in the country near Kazan, his exile in Siberia, his career among the conspirators in Switzerland. It will be the same too when Edmund Wilson presents Trotsky, although Trotsky's harsh and inhuman brilliance is odious to his portraitist. Unfortunately in this last section of *To the Finland Station*, the theme is less firmly held: and it is a great theme—how at last, after

a century of groping, a pair of men with a clear and comprehensive philosophy of history were placed where they could mould the immediate materials of life. It is a pity that at the critical instant in his demonstration Edmund Wilson appears to stagger, and we pass from philosophizing to actions without quite seeing how the transition was wrought. His most impressive work, not only because it is the most laborious and the most novel, is the least completely satisfying of anything he has done: if it is crammed with good things, it is nevertheless a mass of aspects, not an organic whole.

The great masters of criticism have been in their varying ways masters of style, delightful to read, startling us with memorable phrases, rising at the height of their argument to bravura passages which are among the anthology-pieces of the language in which they wrote. Mr Richards has changed all that: good criticism today, if one may heed certain pontiffs, must be drearily vague, desiccated in phrasing, and in its sentences without charm of contour or rhythm. Or it may be couched in the language of conversation, as conversation is carried on by those who have no gift for it. To these powerful heresies Edmund Wilson has not succumbed: he writes agreeably, if without distinction, and some powers of expression he has in a notable degree. The passages quoted show his acute visual sense, his ability to communicate the appearance of a person or a place. He has also a fine taste in slang and in the use of certain sturdy words never to be found in academic quarterlies. The chief and constant attraction of his writing is that of absolute honesty: what is said is what was felt and thought, exactly at the temperature the critic had when he underwent the experiences he is trying to convey.

This honesty is perhaps the most admirable of all Edmund Wilson's gifts. He is as sympathetic and as just as he can be: where his sympathy fails him, as it does when he approaches Paul Elmer More in a tone of continued flippant severity, and where his justice fails him, as it does in his estimate of the narrow scholarship of Housman, it is because, like every man, he is held within the bonds of his temperament, and within those of the social pressures about him. The reader is sure that the critic has done his utmost to release himself from such bonds, that he has never wantonly tightened them, as almost all his contemporaries have done. He has never asked himself what the party-line would be—Marxist, or

Freudian, or bohemian—and he has never allowed a scruple for abstract logic (if one said such and such about Henry James in 1938, must one say this and that about Edith Wharton in 1941?) to come between him and his material.

MAN, NATURE, AND REVELATION* — W. R. TAYLOR

The honour of election to a Gifford Lectureship has fallen to only five Americans, of whom four have been philosophers, William James, John Dewey, Josiah Royce, and William E. Hocking, and one, the last to date, Reinhold Niebuhr, a theologian. However one may interpret the brevity of this list of the elect ones, it is at least patent that the relative distribution of the names over the two fields of philosophy and theology is indicative of a certain lag in American theological thought, which may in part be due to the conditions under which theology is taught in America. Professor Niebuhr wins fresh recognition for American thought and scholarship by the distinction with which he has maintained the high traditions of the Gifford Lectures.

This study of human nature is an expression of the rising tide of revolt against the Humanism which by multiple direct and indirect means has insinuated itself into every department of modern life, and by its corrupting effects on the spirit of the age has brought us to the verge of moral and spiritual bankruptcy. The merit of Niebuhr's work is that, seeing the problem of our age in its proper relations and dimensions, and laying firm hold on ultimate principles, he sets forth with rigour and consistency in analysis and criticism the fundamental weaknesses and contradictions and the inevitable sterility of the humanistic emphasis, and over against it the resources in the Christian interpretation of man. No other writer, in our opinion, compasses the argument so satisfactorily and with such awareness of the elements of the issue and with such sustained mastery of its various phases.

The characteristics of the so-called Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, which had its roots in the Renaissance, made a new appearance in the easy optimism of the first three decades

**The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation.* I. *Human Nature*, by REINHOLD NIEBUHR. Gifford Lectures. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941, $2.75.

of the twentieth century. Man was viewed as the measure of all things. History was to witness a quick and steady progress to Utopia. Politics, economics, sociology, psychology, art, music and literature were all drafted to proclaim the gospel of Modernism. Religion also suffered new orientations. Man had only to be educated and put in agreeable environments in order that the Kingdom of Heaven might be realized on earth. Christianity was to be viewed as an occidental faith whose unique features were the products of such accidents as geography, climate, and race; its claim of a special revelation was to be discounted as a survival of Jewish particularism. Sin lost its tragic significance; and human pride and will-to-power, which disturb the harmony of creation, were referred to environmental influence or some involvement in the natural process. The obvious refutations of this view of man, particularly in contemporary history, has brought about a definite swing away from this pattern of thought. "Both the majesty and the tragedy of human life exceed the dimension within which modern culture seeks to comprehend human existence."

The basal problem is how man shall think of himself. On the one hand, he is a child of nature, caught up in its conditions; on the other, he not only stands outside the world, but transcends himself as the observer and judge of what he wills and does. In the course of history the tendency is to confuse or to disregard the synthesis, and to construct a view of human nature on the basis of one or the other aspect of his dual being. Platonism and Aristotelianism, and to a lesser degree Stoicism, understand man primarily from the standpoint of his rational faculties. Over against this so-called classical view Democritus, Heraclitus and Epicurus, and some of the chthonic cults, interpreted man as wholly a part of nature. Such dichotomic views of man because of the necessity of their own logic can have no conception of meaning in history, and no solution of the element of tragedy in human affairs. The end of this failure of classical thought is disillusionment and pessimism or some absorption of the self in a Neo-Platonic Absolute. Our modern philosophies since the revival of classicism in the Renaissance fall into the ancient errors, and assume more or less the ancient patterns. They are either idealistic or naturalistic according to their affinities. If the former, they tend on the one hand to lose a sense of the finiteness of human nature, conceiving the self as identical with reason, and so losing the self in what Bosanquet

defines as a "rationality beyond the reflective consciousness of self and not-self." Sin becomes in the Platonic sense anarchy due to bodily impulse or to our animal nature, which is viewed as evil. The neglect of the values in the vitalities of our nature comes to view in the tendency of rationalism to favour fixed or static patterns of society and therefore to resist change in established orders. On the other hand, modern man seeks at times to interpret himself wholly with reference to nature. This naturalism has in our times taken concrete expression in Marxism and Fascism. In the former, the material alone is real. Epistemologies and metaphysics are disavowed. Things and not ideas dominate the human scene. Through something like a Hegelian dialectic events take their irrational course, passing from one synthesis to another toward some nebulous goal, not fully apprehended, beyond that of a classless society. The fascist or romantic naturalist also defies all rational principles, and seeks to solve the human problem from the standpoint of its vital impulses as focussed in the primitive unities of race and blood. History accordingly is to be conceived as moving automatically under the impulse of some superhuman historical logic. The individual is submerged in the group and lost in what is nothing more than a "stream of consciousness." Freudianism, joining in this protest of vitalism against the validity of rationalistic constructions, conceives of human nature as a composite of chaotic impulses, the discipline of which leads inevitably to complexes and aberrations. Civilization therefore, in spite of its pretence of order and achievement, is in reality a realm of anarchy. Since there can be no solution of the problem created by the furies of the demonic vitalities of the ego, the Freudian analysis leads to cynicism, pessimism, and despair.

Over against these anthropologies which fail to do justice to the dimension of human nature, and which, in spite of the inner logic of their assumptions and of the refutations of history, persist in falsifying the human situation by false notions of progress and by false dogmas of human perfectibility, there is set the biblical and Christian anthropology. It takes issue with the utopian optimism of Modernism, but with equal emphasis it repudiates the cynical pessimism that lies like a canker in the heart of the age. Its doctrine of man rests on special revelation, which, as a self-disclosure of the Divine mind, is not a product of inductive or deductive reason, but which is not rationally absurd or in defiance

of reason. Accordingly, it views man in terms both of nature and of spirit. Man's self-transcendence forbids him to identify meaning with causality in nature; his bodily and finite particularity equally forbids the loss of the self in a distinctionless absolute of mind or rationality. God as will and personality is therefore the only ground of human individuality. As creature, man is made in the image of God. But along with this high measure of the human stature stands also the concomitant fact that man is a sinner. Modern thinkers, such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud, in their explorations of the dark depths of the human heart, confirm afresh the biblical doctrine of the sinfulness of man. In the words of Principal J. S. Whale, "the congenital weakness of human nature is the submerged rock on which the complacent claims of an optimistic humanism are shipwrecked." The doctrine of original sin is simply the recognition of the dimensions of the tragedy of human existence. Man refuses to recognize his creatureliness, and misuses his freedom to assert the egotism of his will-to-power. The taint in various subtle disguises extends itself through all culture, and even into the highest pretensions of human goodness. All man's acts and thoughts reveal his wilful self-love and egocentricity. His self-condemnation in remorse and repentance is the evidence of a consciousness of freedom which is involved in a condition of sin which, though not the consequence of necessity, is nevertheless inevitable. Yet over against the Augustinian and Reformation doctrines of man's total depravity, it is held that there remains in such concepts as Law traces of the *Justitia Originalis*. Here is the point of contact of Grace. Grace, however, can only point to a consummation in an event beyond time. In the interval between the *Now* and the *Then* there can be no realized Christian order in state or society, only approximations, because of the taint in our nature.

It is evident that the particular excellence of Professor Niebuhr's contribution towards a Christian philosophy lies in the manner of his treatment of the subject and in the philosophic approach to it. In what may be more strictly defined as the theological structure of the argument, his position and emphasis is one with which we have become familiarized in the writings of Emil Brunner, J. S. Whale, and others of this school. In the reaction against Modernism, which by the way is not to be confused with Liberalism, there is a certain precipitate retreat to the theology of the Reformation.

Correct as such thinkers are in their judgment and analysis of the drifts in contemporary thought and expression, they fail to take a hint from the spirit of the neo-Thomasians. Moreover, the basal problem of revelation has not been worked through with clarity and thoroughness. It shares some of the same nebulousness as the Barthian "Word." Where are the limits of special revelation? It is post-biblical as well as biblical? Is it to be found in the Councils of the Church? Is it in Reformation theology or in Trent? Or, in contrast to both, is it sometimes only with Niebuhr? Further, it ought to be said that the major results of the biblical scholarship of the last seventy-five years have not affected Professor Niebuhr's use or exegesis of the biblical sources on which he occasionally grounds his position. This is not to say that his position is fundamentally unbiblical, but it is to say that to use the proof-texts of the Reformation period according to the exegesis of the same period marks an inexcusable indifference to the marches of scholarship in the development of an argument that is certainly addressed to scholars rather than to the masses. A cursory examination of the latest studies in biblical theology would have kept the material up to the level of the allied sciences. In the reaffirmation of neglected spiritual truth we must always remind ourselves that the activities of the Holy Spirit are not limited to any period, even so great a period as that of the Reformation. In the battle against Modernism the movement must be along the total front and with due regard to our spiritual gains in the course of the years.

GERMANY DAY BY DAY — G. DeT. GLAZEBROOK

Many books have been written on the Third Reich and many more will be written, for the importance of the subject and its complexity demand study from various angles and at different points of time. Two recently-published diaries* make a peculiar contribution to an understanding of Germany in the period since the National Socialists attained office. The authors of both had not only the advantage of residence in Germany but access to

**Ambassador Dodd's Diary, 1933-1938*, edited by WILLIAM E. DODD and MARTHA DODD, with an introduction by CHARLES A. BEARD. New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941, $4.50.

Berlin Diary: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent, 1934-1941, by WILLIAM L. SHIRER. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1941, $3.75.

persons—official and unofficial—from whom they could obtain information, which, if never complete or wholly trustworthy, in sum enabled them to interpret events as few others could do. Daily entries give a flavour that is missing in a monograph or reminiscences. They bring to the reader the atmosphere of the country as it changes with circumstances, and the march of history in the making. Both authors were keen and intelligent observers. Both had a natural aversion to the characteristics of National Socialism, and experience of it in operation only served to strengthen this feeling.

To that extent the point of view of the two diarists is the same. In some other ways the two books are complementary. One is essentially a pre-war and the other a war book. Mr Dodd arrived in Germany as Ambassador of the United States in June, 1933, a few months after Hitler became Chancellor. He watched the development of the new régime almost from its inception until he left at the end of 1938. Mr Shirer's continuous residence in Berlin, on the other hand, was from just before the outbreak of war until the end of 1940. Mr Dodd was not a career diplomat, but had been Professor of History at the University of Chicago and was a scholar of repute and author of several important books on American history. It was as a scholar and a liberal, as President Roosevelt told him, that he was wanted in Germany; to be "a standing example" and to cultivate relations with the best in old German learning and thought. Both his liberalism and his learning are apparent on every page of Professor Dodd's diary. There are frequent references to history and to Germans of the type that was rapidly being silenced in the new order. As might be expected, the diary is written in calm and faultless English; but there is never any doubt of the author's views on whatever subject he touches (and he was obviously a man of strong opinions), nor any doubt as to the rising disgust with which he looked at the Germany that was taking shape. Mr Shirer shared that disgust, but he expressed it is different forms, if not the less clearly. His background was not that of the scholar but of the foreign correspondent of the adventurous type. Before becoming continental representative of the Columbia Broadcasting System, he had ranged over Europe, wherever there was excitement and news. At times his diary is overburdened with slang, but it is significant that in his most vivid descriptions he drops the element of jargon and writes simply and effectively.

Both diaries cover more than the German political scene. Dodd's contains pungent criticisms of the American diplomatic service, and many interesting comments on people and events not in the limelight. Shirer's entries begin some months before he settled in Berlin. In Vienna and in Prague he saw the oncoming German advance with dismay, and chafed at the inactivity of the democracies. Both diaries may be read throughout with interest, but the essential theme in both is the war, in its preparation or conduct. As an island of culture in the growing tide of Nazi barbarism it is painfully clear that Dodd's role was impossible from the first. His more specific instructions were to represent to the German government American opinion on the persecution of the Jews and on the failure to pay the debts owing to American creditors. On the reality of the persecution he was left no ground for doubt since case after case was brought before him by those who hoped for help. On this and on the debt question he had endless conversations with German officials—conversations in which promises were sometimes made, but from which there was no result. Shirer's job was to get what news he could and to broadcast as much as was passed by the censor. He was less tied by precedent and official duties and more free to move about on his quest; but in a sense he failed too in the end, for the growing strictness of the censorship made his work impossible.

The impressions that these two North American liberals received of the men and the issues in Nazi Germany are clearly portrayed and full of interest, and not least because there have been few foreigners to see Germany from the inside and to report with frankness on what they saw. Much has been written of the chief characters of the Nazi régime, but it is a subject that never loses interest. Dodd speaks of "a unique triumvirate! Hitler, less educated, more romantic, with a semi-criminal record; Goebbels and Goering, both Doctors of Philosophy, both animated by intense class and foreign hatreds and both willing to resort to the most ruthless methods. They do not love each other, but in order to maintain their power, they have to sit down together." This was written in the spring of 1934. Six years later Shirer noted of Hitler that, "notwithstanding many reports to the contrary which float abroad, he is the sole and absolute boss of Germany, brooking no interference from anyone and rarely asking and almost never heeding suggestions from his intimidated lieutenants. The men

around him are all loyal, all afraid, and none of them are his friends. He has no friends. . . ." Hess, he adds, is "the only man in the world he fully trusts." Neither writer was under delusions as to the control of the Nazis in Germany, but both found lack of sympathy if not opposition. The Ambassador was convinced that unofficially many Germans disliked the government policy toward the churches, the universities, and the outside world, but it was more a negative than a positive attitude. During the war Shirer noted over and over again the absence of any enthusiasm, even when there were striking victories, and was convinced that the average German hoped for and expected an early peace. Both men were struck by several occasions when crowds failed to gather for processions or other functions.

Like other men in responsible positions, Dodd was worried as to the possibility of war. The denials of Neurath and others gave him little comfort, and he looked with alarm at the international scene, which he could examine well from one of the most disturbing capitals and surrounded by the representatives of the other powers. The failure of The Disarmament Conference and the withdrawal of Germany from the League were blows, as was the Ethiopian affair. Two conversations are worthy of quotation. The confidential secretary of the French Ambassador told Dodd, in May, 1935, that France would not go to war, and had promised Mussolini in the previous year the annexation of Abyssinia. In December the Ambassador himself told Dodd flatly that "Mussolini would have made war even if the oil sanctions had been applied. We, the French Government, were unwilling to go to war, even if England were attacked." Rumours of war continued, and when he left Germany Dodd had little hope that peace could be maintained.

The story of the actual outbreak and the progress of the long-anticipated war is carried on in the Shirer diary, and it is a story that is very well told. Shirer was an eye-witness of part of the Polish campaign and then was left to speculate in Berlin as to the next move. His guess was that the Germans would go through Holland, but the Dutch were blind to the danger and would make no preparations for defence. Meanwhile Shirer visited the Franco-German front and was amazed at the unreality of the scene there. He examined, too, the areas in the Ruhr bombed by the British, and was obviously disappointed by the small damage caused—

as he was to be about raids much later in the war. When the invasion of the Low Countries began Shirer followed hotfoot behind the armies, and it is here that the best part of the book begins. His descriptions are simple and vivid. He was impressed on the one hand by the failure of the defence to blow up the bridges, and on the other by what he saw of the efficient organization of the Germans, their effective weapons. The German army was "a gigantic, impersonal war machine, run as coolly and efficiently, say, as our automobile industry in Detroit." And the morale of the troops was "fantastically good." When the German army advanced to Paris Shirer was at its heels. Along the way he saw no evidence of serious fighting; the towns were destroyed but the fields almost untouched. Thinking it over back in Berlin, he concluded simply that "France did not fight"—the army was paralysed. The French, he says, had no will to fight. "There was a complete collapse of French society and of the French soul . . .; there was either treachery or criminal negligence in the High Command and among the high officers in the field." In his opinion the allied commanding officers were markedly inferior to those of the German army; the former being old men, and the latter young and enterprising, in command of troops whose morale—he uses the phrase again—was fantastically good.

Like many others, Mr Shirer asked himself why Hitler did not invade England after his conquest of France; and his answer was that Hitler, after hesitating, came to the conclusion that the invasion would never be necessary, for the British would make peace—on Nazi terms. Then, when that plan had failed, it was decided (he thinks on August 5) that the invasion must be undertaken. The Royal Air Force was to be annihilated and the army to cross in safety. That plan too failed because the British were prepared to see their cities destroyed rather than risk all their planes in defending them. "To the British this was mere common sense and the only tactic that could save them. To the German military mind it was incomprehensible." Goering could not get all the R.A.F. in the air at any one time, and could not destroy the planes on the ground because they were scattered over a thousand fields.

Just before leaving Berlin Shirer asked himself, too, why German morale remained so good, when there was no enthusiasm for the war. He found three explanations: the achievement of

political unification, revenge for the defeat of 1918, and fear of the consequences of defeat. "They are beginning to see that a victory with the Nazi régime, however much many of them may dislike it, is better than another German defeat, which this time, if it ever comes about, will make Versailles seem like a peace of sweet reason and destroy not only the nation but the Germans as a people."

CANADA AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

F. R. Scott

The Research Committee of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs has planned a series of biennial surveys of Canadian foreign policy, and this is the first volume. It is an excellent beginning to what should prove to be a most valuable scheme of work. The drastic consequences of an unsuccessful foreign policy—as evidenced by two major wars in twenty-five years—are only too painfully clear; yet until very recently it has not been possible for Canadians to lay their hands on any book that would explain to them the nature of their own international relations. The publication of *Canada Looks Abroad* in 1938 marked the arrival of a more mature stage in our national thinking, when various alternatives began to be freely discussed and instinctive attitudes subjected to reasoned analysis. Now *Canada in World Affairs* gives us a contemporary account of Canadian foreign policy through the immediate pre-war years of 1935-9, and inaugurates, we may hope, the period of methodical recording of our diplomatic history.

Professor Soward's description of Canada's political relations in these years is the main section of the book. He writes without bias or bitterness of the dark and dismal days when the League was being steadily destroyed and Nazism steadily assisted to power. Though the tale is not new, it never ceases to appal. Canada's part in the whole process seems particularly humiliating, for we had neither the excuse of being near the scene of possible conflict nor of being governed by a Tory party. Yet Canada rebuked its Geneva representative in 1936 for proposing effective sanctions against Italian aggression in Ethiopia, approved and supported the policy which

**Canada in World Affairs: The Pre-War Years*, by F. H. Soward, J. F. Parkinson, N. A. M. Mackenzie, and T. W. L. MacDermot. Oxford University Press, 1941, $3.00.

enabled Fascism to destroy Spanish democracy (thus giving Fascist propaganda an effective base for appeal to the Latin races in this hemisphere), clung to "neutrality" in face of Japanese aggression in China while selling war materials heavily to Japan, welcomed Munich and the appeasements of Chamberlain—and all the time pretended to "no commitments," when the traditional and indeed constitutional policy of intervention was implicit in the circumstances. Had a purely North American policy been intended, such behaviour would have had some logic, if little idealism, but the acceptance of ultimate responsibility by entering the war retroactively destroys even this logic. Looked at in either way, the pre-war years present a sorry tale on the political side, and should be remembered now only for the purpose of strengthening the resolve to make a strong supra-national authority of some kind, regional or universal, the first, last, and all-embracing war aim.

Mr Parkinson's shorter section on Economics introduces a somewhat brighter note. The Canadian trade agreement of 1935 with the United States paved the way for the Canadian, United States and United Kingdom agreements of 1938, and not only assisted the growth of Canadian-American co-operation, which is so marked a feature of the recent war years, but also inaugurated the trend away from the Ottawa agreements of 1932. Since Canada invented imperial preferences, it is fitting she should prevent them from hampering world recovery. Mr Parkinson's chapters are perhaps too technical for the lay reader, but they deal with fundamentally important material, and contain an excellent analysis of the trade agreements of the period.

A general criticism of these two sections of the book would be that they are not sufficiently integrated. The economic nature of Canadian society explains much of the policy recorded by Mr Soward, and of this relationship more might have been said. Politics and economics are too much separated. The dominance of certain industrial and financial groups in Canadian politics, the profit to exporters to be made out of sales to Japan and Germany (and even to General Franco through Spanish Morocco), coupled with the fear of Communism which allied these groups in outlook with the Catholic sections of the country—these are just as real forces determining Canadian foreign policy as are the ties with England and the Commonwealth, which are so usually given as explanation. Too much space in the book is devoted to recording the speeches of

Mr King and others, and not enough to the social factors which are the basic determinants of policy enunciated in these speeches. Speeches did not make the policy: they only rationalized it.

Looking back over the record, we are almost inclined to agree with the historic remark of Mr Bennett which Professor Soward quotes: "The foreign policy of this country is so obvious that it does not require much discussion."

Part III of the volume, on international law and diplomacy, is disappointing. It is not clear what function it is expected to perform. A digest of legal cases relating to international law is better left to the technical journals, for it will interest a few lawyers only. On the other hand the chapter on neutrality, two pages long, is very inadequate as a discussion of this subject—particularly as it comes to the highly important conclusion that even today Canada's sovereignty in the matter of declaring war and peace is still in doubt, despite the events of September, 1939.

A collection of documents compiled by Mr MacDermot makes up the last section of the book. Important speeches as well as some official documents are included. This addition is valuable, and enables the reader to supplement the text at important points. It contains, of course, Lord Tweedsmuir's famous statement that a Canadian's first loyalty is to Canada and to Canada's King, which Mr Soward styles "the most significant remark made in Canada in 1937"—significant, it would seem, because the excitement caused by its utterance proved how close we still are psychologically to the colonial era. It would have been logical to have included in this section the British guarantee to Poland and Mr King's telegrams of August 25, 1939, to Hitler, Mussolini, and the Polish President: the first was Canada's direct link with the war, and the second has the distinction of being, as Mr Soward points out, "the first and only effort by a Canadian government at mediation in Europe."

Altogether this book is indispensable to the student of Canada's foreign policy. The light it casts on domestic politics is no less important, and much might be written of the roles of the Liberal, Conservative, and C. C. F. parties during these years. On the small C. C. F. group fell most of the burden of opposition, and their contribution stands out from these pages. Not till the present war is over, however, will it be possible to assess correctly or speak with complete freedom of this critical period of our national history. Meanwhile *Canada in World Affairs* amply suffices.

HITLER'S NEW ORDER*

B. WILKINSON

IT is hard to finish a long reading of this finely edited collection of Hitler's speeches without feeling that Churchill's famous definition of the *Führer* as a bloodthirsty guttersnipe was not, though uttered in the heat of conflict, very far from a cold and sober statement of the truth. These thousand pages of turgid oratory slowly give rise to a despairing conviction that the worst caricatures by Hitler's enemies have added little of the grotesque to this contemporary man of destiny. All the well-known traits of Hitler's character are here: subject to some reservations to be discussed below, we may agree that, as Raymond Gram Swing says in his introduction, Hitler's oratory contains all that there is of Hitler's mind. We see him climbing from obscurity to be the colossus which bestrides the narrow world, always using the same antics and manœuvres, always ringing the changes on a few simple themes. In his early speeches he is more openly the soap-box orator; in his later speeches he has gained the ear of Europe and America, almost the ear of the civilized world, and he has become more circumspect and usually more restrained; but he can still indulge in his old vituperation, as when he defames Dr Eduard Beneš or raves against the "lies and hypocrisy" of England, after the outbreak of war. There is little, if any, growth of stature. Hitler ends the volume (June 22, 1941) as he began, with a diatribe against "that plot, familiar to us all, between Jews and democrats, Bolshevists and reactionaries, with the sole aim of inhibiting the establishment of the new German people's state, and of plunging the Reich anew into impotence and misery."

So, with Germany's declaration of war against Russia, the wheel of Hitler's oratory comes full circle. In these 987 pages we are presented with what will surely be regarded in the days to come as one of the most amazing products of the years between the Treaty of Versailles and the outbreak of the second World War—the rise of an unknown corporal, in a defeated and despirited nation, to rule Germany in thirteen years; in twenty-two, to threaten the liberties of the world.

There is little wonder that his career, more remarkable even

**My New Order.* Speeches of Adolph Hitler. Edited with commentary by RAOUL DE ROUSSY DE SALES, with an introduction by RAYMOND GRAM SWING. New York, Reynal and Hitchcock [Toronto, McClelland], 1941, $3.00.

than that of Napoleon, has given rise to the myth of Hitler's genius, carefully fostered by Nazi propaganda, and appearing in the most unlikely places. The truth or otherwise of this, a very elusive question, will not be settled in a day. Probably the outcome of the war will do more to settle it, one way or another, than any amount of academic discussion. Meanwhile this timely volume will do something to provide material for a more sober judgment. One reservation must be made however, already referred to above. Though Hitler's speeches contain, perhaps, all that there is of his mind, they must not be regarded as deliberately self-revealing; quite the reverse. They are, and always have been, despite their appearance of passion and even hysteria, coldly calculated instruments, aimed at a desired effect. Perhaps Hitler has never said any things simply because he believed them. What he says is not really an indication of what he believes. But what he chooses to say is an indication of his kind of mind. His speeches may, and in fact do, speak volumes for his political cunning, while revealing the complete bankruptcy of deep reflection or ripe wisdom. Hitler himself—the real, inner man,—they still obscure under a smoke-screen of words.

Considering that he literally talked himself into power, Hitler is revealed in all this vast accumulation of oratory, as consistently very dull. Of course, cold print was emphatically not his medium. We miss the fanfare of trumpets, the mass excitement, the organized applause. Still, it is safe to prophesy that nobody, in future generations, will read the speeches for their polish, wit or wisdom; they will be read simply as an example of the first large-scale and impressive use of words as supreme factors in political strategy and of modern governmental action. They finally usher in the present era of the microphone, of direct contact between rulers (autocratic or democratic) and subjects, of policies determined or put into effect in the market-place.

As such they undoubtedly show us Hitler at his best. Whatever his faults and failings, the fact remains that he first used the new methods (of course he did not invent them) to mould the destinies of a great nation and aspire to dominion over the world. And he used them with remarkable success. When this has been conceded, however, some very necessary qualifications should follow. Hitler's short-term achievement has been great; but it does not necessarily stamp him as a man of genius, unless we are to give that much

abused term a connotation which it has not usually had in the past.

In the first place, it was mediocrity rather than genius which first endeared Hitler to the German nation. He said things in a way the German masses, starved, humiliated, confused, wanted them to be said. His very limitations helped him to cling to a few simple conceptions, reiterating them unceasingly; and these happened to be the ones most needed at the time. Germany was in no mood to be really intelligent about herself in the years 1918-23. Hitler was not intelligent: he despised intelligent people. On the other hand, he did possess a fanatical and boundless faith in the Germans; they were always his people of destiny; he never failed to blame others—Jews, pacifists, communists—for their failures. His simple, and often absurd theories, solving doubts and problems with comforting certainty, calling for nothing from his listeners save obedience to inspired leaders, were irresistible to the masses, even while they evoked ridicule or contemptuous silence from the rest. Whether he did much or little for Germany cannot be discussed here. The fact remains that he was flung up by the turmoil of German political life when that life was at its lowest ebb in modern times.

The fact that he subsequently rose to dominate the continent of Europe does not serve, either, to stamp him as a genius. Perhaps no politician has ever owed more to circumstances than Adolph Hitler, though no politician has been more eager to take all the credit for himself. It would be impossible, even if there were space, to discuss the record of his attack on the liberties of Europe, dramatically illustrated by these pages: the story is only, as yet, half told. It records his short-term triumphs; his failures are, as we believe, yet to come. Few great statesmen have lived so entirely in the present as Hitler. There is rarely any sign, in his speeches, that he looked, or could look, far ahead. He was, as he said, like a somnambulist: he considered deeply, if at all, only one step at a time. He took the quick way, and by preference, the violent way, to get what he wanted. He was so sure of his power and his destiny that he disregarded the forces piling up on the horizon, which would one day move forward to meet him. He had no perception of the depths of strength in the European order. That they reached down to the bed-rock of ancient ideals and traditions meant nothing to him, as history itself meant

nothing except in so far as it could be made to sustain the claims and doctrines of the Nazi state. Whether he was really as ignorant as his speeches suggest, of a whole universe which is rigidly excluded from the narrow boundaries of his recorded orations, it is perhaps impossible to decide. If he was, we need look no further for his failure to found a New Order on the ruins of Europe.

Thus, this collection of his speeches, even though published in the hour of his apparent triumph, serves much more, to the student of history, as a warning than as anything else. This much should be said, in spite of the feelings of the moment which militate against a dispassionate assessment; for the issues raised by Hitler's speeches are far more important than the question of Adolph Hitler himself. The *Führer* was the product of a system, a system by no means peculiar to Germany. His career and the speeches which have been an important element in forming it, together constitute a heavy indictment against the whole modern political order, even though they were the product of that order operating under exceptional conditions of strain, and vitiated by some exceptionally bad traditions, military and nationalistic. Together, they show what a frail defence modern popular education and habits are against the force of modern propaganda, and how insecure the position of learning and abstract science is, in the modern world. They provide grounds for the disturbing thought that, when we do get to our period of reconstruction, we shall have to go much deeper than to schemes of semi-socialistic and state-controlled organization of the community, if we would destroy the forces which produced and sustained Adolph Hitler. We have somehow got to fortify ourselves much more strongly than in the past, against the possibility of such an attack, within the community, on our dignity and integrity, as is recorded in the pages of this book.

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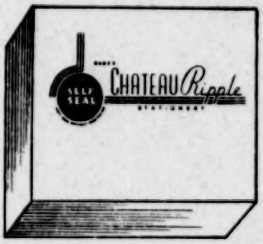

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